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Faculty of Arts
Department Of English

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Compiled and prepared by

Dr. Yasmeen Darwish

English Department

Faculty of Arts

South Valley University

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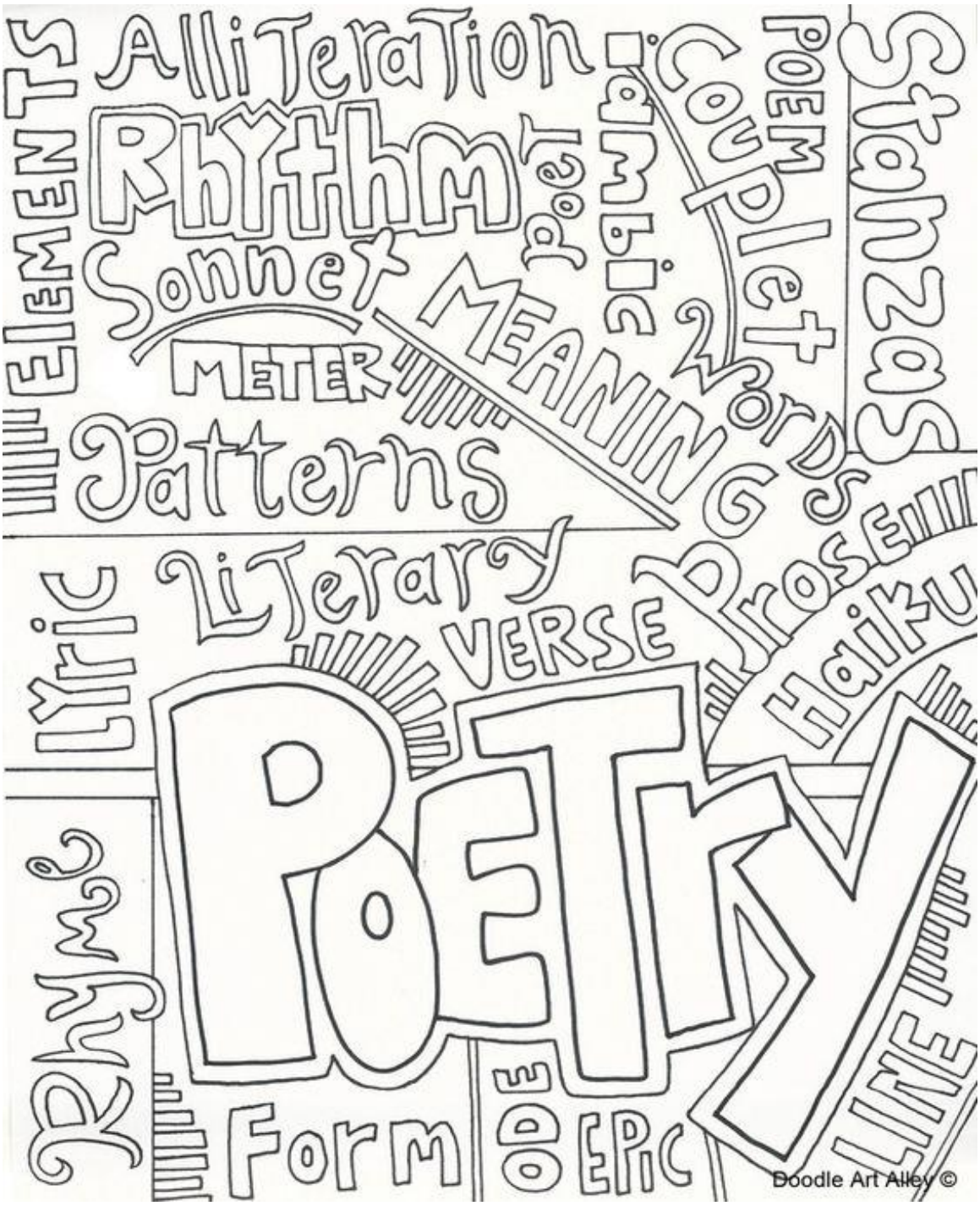
ELEMENTS
Alliteration
Rhythm
Sonnet
Meter
Poet
Epic
Couplet
Poem
Stanzas
Meaning
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Lyric
Literary
Verse
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The English Renaissance

It was the renaissance in the sixteenth century which gave birth to a variety of style and encouraged experimentation in English literature. For the first time the poets experimented with Italian style and created sonnets. The term modern was never used before, however with the change in the structure and form, the term “Modern English Poetry” was used to identify these newly developed poems. Courtly poets Wyatt and Surrey introduced new style, rhythm and form in English poetry which was identified as the modern English poetry since they were the first reformers in English meter and style and changed the traditional style.

The essay here will study about the birth of modern English poetry and how it evolved during the age in the expert hands of Wyatt, Surrey, Spenser, Shakespeare, Sidney etc. It will further highlight the characteristic of the modern poetry of the period and highlight the fact that for the first time the greatest playwright Shakespeare wrote sonnets under the influence of Italian literature and others paved way for the heroic and epic poetry for the poets of the

subsequent age. While lyrical style was predominant, but not the only form of the era, the poets experimented with early blank verse and also introduced the epic form and the dramatic or conversational poetry by William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser and Phillip Sydney which were highly appreciated and read even today.

Beginning of the Renaissance

The Age of Chaucer was followed by The *Renaissance Period* also known as the *Elizabethan Period* or the *Age of Shakespeare* in the history of English literature. It is, in fact, the ‘golden age’ in the history of English literature. After the *Middle Ages* in Europe came the Renaissance, meaning revival or rebirth. As a result, the darkness of the middle ages was replaced by the enlightenment of the human mind with the ‘Revival of Learning’, which the Renaissance prompted.

The English Renaissance was a cultural and artistic movement in England dating from the late 15th century to the early 17th century. It is associated with the European Renaissance that is usually regarded as beginning in Italy in the late 14th century. The beginning of the English Renaissance is often taken to be 1485, when the Battle of Bosworth Field ended **the Wars of the Roses** and inaugurated the **Tudor Dynasty**. Renaissance style and ideas, however, were slow to penetrate England, and the Elizabethan era in the second half of the 16th century is usually regarded as the height of the English Renaissance.

The English Renaissance is different from the Italian Renaissance in several ways. The dominant art forms of the English Renaissance were literature and music. Visual arts in the English Renaissance were much less significant than in the Italian Renaissance. The English Renaissance, the age of William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Sir Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson, John Donne, and John Milton, was one of the most brilliant periods in Western literary history for the production of great poetry.

Between 1509, with the reign of Henry VIII, until the end of the Commonwealth in 1660, nondramatic poetry of the most varied kind—from epic to ballad—found a voice and an audience in recitation, manuscript circulation, and print. The period's ideals were inscribed in the heroic narratives of Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene and John Milton's Paradise Lost. Beginning with the lyric poetry of **John Skelton** and **Sir Thomas Wyatt,** the blending of native and classical influences added richness to verse. These qualities would mature in Shakespeare's Sonnets.

English Renaissance poetry is customarily divided chronologically in two ways. Scholars distinguish between either **the 16th and 17th centuries**, or between **Tudor**

(1485–1603) and Stuart (1603–1649) periods. The division between Tudor and Stuart poetry is useful, for instance, in tracing how different poetic concerns, such as satire and religious poetry, challenged sonnet and epic.

For some scholars the **Renaissance** took place during from the late 15th to the early 17th century. It begins with the early Tudor Age (1485–1557) and reaches its cultural summit during the 45-year reign of the final Tudor monarch, the charismatic Elizabeth I (1558–1603); the Elizabethan Age. The period extends into the reigns of the Stuarts, King James I (1603–25); the Jacobean Age and perhaps that of Charles I (1625–49); the Caroline Age. The era witnessed political tensions and religious rifts between Catholics and Protestants, especially the so-called Puritan sects that fought to reform the Church of England by removing any Catholic or “popish” practices. The Renaissance ends once those tensions boil over into a different period of revolutionary change and a succession of nation-shaking events: the series of civil wars between Parliamentarians and Royalists, the execution of Charles I, the interregnum of republican-led governments, and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

Recently, critics and literary historians have begun to call the **Renaissance** as the “Early Modern” period. It is an important period in the development of English language poetry. It marks a transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age, the movement from craft to art and from writer as craftsman to writer as artist.

Characteristics of the Renaissance

Here are major characteristics of this period:

1. Rebirth and rediscovery

Though historians debate the precise origins of the Renaissance, most agree that it began in Italy in the late 1300s, with the decline in influence of Roman Catholic Christian doctrine and the reawakening of interest in Greek and Latin texts by philosophers such as Aristotle and Cicero and poets such as Ovid and Virgil. The extraordinary flowering in visual art that occurred in the great Italian city states of Florence and Venice in the early 16th century, including artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael, was another. Yet another was Johann Gutenberg's invention of the printing press around 1440, which enabled books to be mass-produced in the Western world for the first time. Aided by a quickly shifting political landscape, and an increase in trade and economic activity, these new ways of thinking began to spread northwards across Europe. The fact that it was a transnational movement, which came to touch every country in Europe, is one of the most crucial things about the Renaissance.

The influence of the Italian scholar **Petrarch** revitalized interest in the classical thought of the Greeks and Romans. This revival of classical thought was a rejection of the "barbarism" and the "corruptions" of the centuries since the times of the Greeks and Romans.

2. Humanism

Humanism led to people's renewed interest in classical education, including philosophy, history and physics. Gradually, the concept of a 'humanistic' curriculum began to focus on classical 'humanities' subjects such as philosophy, history, drama and poetry. In Britain, humanism was spread by a rapid increase in the number of 'grammar' schools (as their name indicates, language was their primary focus, and students were often required to speak in Latin during school hours), and the jump in the number of children exposed to the best classical learning. Shakespeare, Marlowe, Spenser, Jonson, Bacon: almost every major British Renaissance intellectual one can name received a humanist education.

The embracing of Humanism made sweeping changes. Whereas medieval scholars had been concerned with the

service and defense of religion, the Renaissance scholar, poet, and philosopher concerned himself with the real world, the world of nature and men.

The Renaissance, or "Rebirth," was a revival of learning and art in Europe after the Dark Ages. Renaissance in the sixteenth century connotes to the idea of achieving liberation from the authority of Church. Renaissance is about the discovery of the world and the discovery of man, by man, or Revival of Learning, re-awakening was due to the study of the ancient classics such as Greece and Rome. Earlier the books and manuscripts were sealed for common men. Before the renaissance the books were for gentleman, monks, court and Church. This movement helped in familiarizing common people with the classical art and culture. Italy was the first home for Renaissance which helped in inculcating humanistic spirit.

Spencer laid the foundation of new poetry with his invention of fresh vocabulary, new forms as well as humanistic theme and sensuous imagery. New forms developed and thus gave birth to unique craftsmanship that enriched the English poetry with new forms such as sonnets, elegy, and pastorals enriched poetry. Thus English

poetry experienced renewal through ‘Humanism’ in poetry after a prolonged period of sterility. Courtly Poets Sir Thomas Wyatt and Earl of Surrey took the responsibility of reviving poetry by embracing the model and stimulus from Italy. Under the influence of fourteenth century Italian poet, Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch) the father of sonnet, who used the form to idealize love. Soon sonnet matured in the hands of other poets and evolved as one of the most popular verse forms of the Elizabethan period.

3. The Reformation

Humanism produced a strange paradox: European society was still overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, yet the writers and thinkers now in vogue came from classical, pre-Christian times. The clash was made more obvious in 1517, when a German friar called Martin Luther, appalled by corruption in the Church, launched a protest movement against Catholic teachings. Luther argued that the Church had too much power and needed to be reformed, and promoted a theology that stressed a more direct relationship between believers and God.

Another central plank of his thinking was that the Bible should be available not just in Latin, spoken by the elite, but democratically available in local languages. Luther published a German translation of the Bible in 1534, which – assisted by the growth of the printing press– helped bring about translations into English, French and other languages. In turn, this increased literacy rates, meaning that more people had access to education and new thinking. But the political consequences for Europe were violent, as war raged and Protestant and Catholic nations and citizens vied for control.

The corruption in the churches led to the reformation which called for restoring Christianity to its early purity as a simple religion based on the Bible. Many divisions were resulted because of the reformation: the Roman Catholic Church and the New Protestant Church.

Renaissance Poetry

The poetry of the earlier part of the 16th century is generally less important, with the exception of the work of **John Skelton**, which exhibits a curious combination of medieval and Renaissance influences. It was the renaissance in the sixteenth century which gave birth to a variety of style and encouraged experimentation in English literature. For the first time the poets experimented with Italian style and created sonnets. The term modern was never used before, however with the change in the structure and form, the term “Modern English Poetry” was used to identify these newly developed poems. ***Courtly poets*** **Wyatt** and **Surrey** introduced new style, rhythm and form in English poetry which was identified as the modern English poetry since they were the first reformers in English meter and style and changed the traditional style.

NOTE: The term “courtly makers” was used by George Puttenham to designate courtly poets of the sixteenth century. “Courtly Poets” is a phrase applied to the court poets of Henry VIII who introduced the ‟new poetry‟ from Italy and France into England. ‟Maker‟ was used in

the sixteenth century, both in Scotland and England for poets. The use of the term arising from the concept of the poet as a creator (the word "Poet" itself comes from a Greek word meaning "maker" or "doer".)

To begin with the modern lyrical style was first introduced by **Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542)**, after he studied Italian sonnets. He introduced new forms which was unknown to the traditional English writers. His lyrics were magnificent in expressing courtly sentiments in melodious strain. Wyatt along with the 'courtly makers' who followed him soon exercised their talent in language.

One of the 'courtly makers', **Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey**, was equally sensitive to the literary fashions that influenced Europe from Italy and like Wyatt, he too engaged himself in translating work to enrich English poetry with French and Italian masterpieces in the simple language. His tone was elegiac and love for nature was genuine which he mingled in love yielding sonnets. Surrey's contribution in English poetry was uncompromising with his translation of Virgil's Aeneid he gifted the world literature the rarest verse form, 'blank verse' that helped in matching with the spirit of renaissance. Surrey is thus identified as the first precursor

of verse form which was later used by Milton and Shakespeare in greatest poems and drama.

In the hands of Wyatt English poetry experienced rapid shift from the stage of language also known as Middle English to the stage known as Modern English where these poets specially Wyatt and Surrey, borrowed, translated as well as imitated from Italian as well as French poets. Thus it can be said after studying from the great works of literature that **Wyatt** wrote lyrics but **Surrey** tried his hands with blank verse. While **Wyatt** picked the Italian style and wrote sonnets, **Surrey** developed unrhymed pentameters (or black verse) later perfected by Dryden and Milton. Thus the poetry of England during the Renaissance developed under the influence of Chaucer, folk songs and Italian form. Poets experimented with simple themes like life of ordinary men and women, relationship between sexes and the treachery and hypocrisy of courtly life. The poetry no longer remained limited within the genteel society or was written with a purpose of educating gentlemen. Instead the new forms developed, sonnets and lyrics appeared.

The two greatest innovators of the new, rich style of Renaissance poetry in the last quarter of the 16th century were **Sir Philip Sidney** and **Edmund Spenser**.

Sidney, universally recognized as the model Renaissance nobleman, outwardly polished as well as inwardly conscientious, inaugurated the vogue of the sonnet cycle in his Astrophel and Stella (written 1582?; published 1591). These lyrics profess to see in her an ideal of womanhood that in the Platonic manner leads to a perception of the good, the true, and the beautiful and consequently of the divine. This idealization of the beloved remained a favored motif in much of the poetry and drama of the late 16th century; it had its roots not only in Platonism but also in the Platonic speculations of humanism and in the chivalric idealization of love in medieval romance.

The greatest monument to that idealism, broadened to include all features of the moral life, is Spenser's uncompleted Faerie Queene (1596), the most famous work of the period. In each of its completed six books it depicts the activities of a hero that point toward the ideal form of a particular virtue, and at the same time it looks forward to the marriage of Arthur, who is a combination of all the virtues,

and Gloriana, who is the ideal form of womanhood and the embodiment of Queen Elizabeth. In a number of other lyrical and narrative works Sidney and Spenser displayed the ornate, highly figured style characteristic of a great deal of Elizabethan poetic expression.

The great sonneteers of the period, Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare were the authors of legendary works like, Astrophel and Stella, Sonnets and Amoretti. The themes are inspired by humanism of renaissance and Sidney is known as the greatest sonneteer of the age after Shakespeare

At the end of the Elizabethan age and the start of Jacobean age English poets of the early 17th century are divided into Cavaliers and metaphysical poets. *Two poetic tendencies became visible toward the end of the 16th and in the early part of the 17th centuries.* The **first tendency** is exemplified by the poetry of **John Donne** and the other so-called **metaphysical poets**, which carried the metaphorical style to heights of daring complexity and ingenuity. The involved metaphysical style remained fashionable until late in the 17th century.

The **second** late Renaissance poetic **tendency** was in reaction to the Spenserians and to the metaphysical poets. Best represented by the accomplished poetry of **Ben Jonson** and his school, it reveals a classically pure and restrained style that had strong influence on late figures such as Robert Herrick and the other **Cavalier poets** and gave the direction for the poetic development of the succeeding neoclassical period.

The last great poet of the English Renaissance was the Puritan writer John Milton, who, having at his command a thorough classical education and the benefit of the preceding half-century of experimentation in the various schools of English poetry, approached with greater maturity than Spenser the task of writing a great English epic. Although he adhered to Sidney's and Spenser's notions of the inspired role of the poet as the lofty instructor of humanity, he rejected the fantastic and miscellaneous machinery, involving classical mythology and medieval knighthood, of The Faerie Queene in favor of the central Christian and biblical tradition. With grand simplicity and poetic power Milton narrated in Paradise Lost (1667) the machinations of Satan leading to the fall of Adam and Eve

from the state of innocence; and he performed the task in such a way as to “justify the ways of God to man” and to express the central Christian truths of freedom, sin, and redemption as he conceived them. His other poems, such as the elegy Lycidas (1637), Paradise Regained (1671), and the classically patterned tragedy Samson Agonistes (1671), similarly reveal astonishing poetic power and grace under the control of a profound mind.

The Renaissance includes the Elizabethan Age (1558 1603), the Jacobean Age (1603–1625), the Caroline Age (1625–1649), and the Commonwealth Period (1649–1660) are commonly separated into four parts.

Forms of the Renaissance poetry

Perhaps the most recognizable form in Renaissance poetry was the sonnet. The word sonnet is derived from the Italian word “sonetto,” which means a “little song” or small lyric. In poetry, a sonnet has 14 lines, and is written in iambic pentameter. Each line has 10 syllables. It has a specific rhyme scheme, and a Volta, or a specific turn. It was perfected by the 14th-century poet Petrarch. The sonnet was brought to England by Sir Thomas Wyatt, when he started translating the works of the Italian poet Petrarch. And later it was developed and shaped into English and popularized by the likes of Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, Shakespeare, Marlowe, and others.

16th century poetry mainly focused on sonnets. Sonnet is a subjective poem, a type of lyrical poem which was written to express the personal feelings and emotions of the poet. Subjective poetry underwent decline in the medieval period. In the sixteenth century it regained importance due to the Renaissance (the human feelings, emotions and art forms were given importance). In the middle age the main

emphasis was on the religion and morality, but with Renaissance came the change.

Features of Petrarchan sonnet were, **firstly**, the poet idealized his mistress. She is worshipped as an epitome of beauty. The beauty of the lady is mesmerizing and is often compared to the Classical Goddesses. She is virtuous and time and gain referred to as Aphrodite or Venus. **Secondly**, the dominating these of the poetry were, the lover would constantly woo his lady however she rarely responds or reacts to his call. Love is treated in a spiritual way. **Thirdly**, the poet relies strongly on the figures of speech with specific focus on figures of speech and allusion while depicting in the poems.

Wyatt, the first English sonneteer followed the Petrarchan form however brought in changes in the English setting and incorporated greater liveliness and occasional humor which was not present in the Italian sonnets. With **Spenser** in Amoretti the style matured and in the hands of Sir Philip Sidney a note of psychological complexity first came in poetry. **Sydney's** conflict between ideal public role and yearning for lady love became one of the mostly used themes is the sonnets of the later time. **Shakespeare**

however, deviated from in style from his predecessors, dedicated about 126 sonnets to the fair youth where the identity was ambiguous. While the classical poets wrote poetry as mean for immortalization, Shakespeare immortalizes the youth and beauty of his friends through the sonnets.

Following the Petrarchan pattern they have further shown how the poet would often suffer from frustration and despair due to their love by the mistress. Shakespeare too has referred to the similar mood of melancholy and despair which was depicted dramatically.

Other poets of the time followed the structural division of the sonnet used by Petrarch, the octave and sestet, a few like Wyatt and Spenser experimented with three quatrains and a couplet. However, it was Shakespeare who studied various styles and popularized the form of fourteen lines with a new rhyme scheme that other Elizabethan sonneteers never used.

Italian or Petrarchan sonnet was introduced by 14th century Italian poet Petrarch. There are 14 lines of iambic pentameter divided into the “octet” or the first 8 lines and the

“sestet” (the next six). There is a turn or “Volta,” between the octet and sestet. Here the poet gives a different perspective or argument and it occurs between the octet and the sestet.

Spenserian Sir Edmund Spenser was the first poet who modified the Petrarch’s form, and introduced a new rhyme scheme which is specific to Spenser, and such types of sonnets are called Spenserian sonnets. It consists of has 14 lines, three quatrains, and a couplet.

Shakespearean has 14 lines, three quatrains, and a couplet that’s considered a conclusion to the poem. It is generally written in iambic pentameter, in which there are 10 syllables in each line.

Conclusion

Literary works of sixteenth century were not only significant but also unique. The Renaissance inspired the writers and new forms of expression came into use. Poetry was a dominant form of expression and under Henry VIII it reached new heights.

Courtiers Wyatt and Surrey first experimented with new forms of meter and rhythm in English after studying Italian poetry of love, passion and emotion. Steeped in Italian fervor, thus Wyatt, the first modern English poet introduced sonnet form in vernacular and made it popular among the writer. While humanism and return to rustics were the predominant theme of Renaissance, Surry introduced black verse to express the spirit of the re-birth phase in true form.

Though, Wyatt and Surrey experimented with modern style in lyrics, it was under the great poets like Spenser, Sidney and Shakespeare, the forms, rhythm and style perfected and contributed to the literary excellence of the time. Other styles also developed during the later part of sixteenth century and gave birth to the metaphysical poetry by John Donne, Vaughn and Crabbe. Nonetheless, soon

followed the greatest works of all time by John Milton with his “Paradise Lost”, that articulated the conflict between God, man and nature in true spirits of the modern sentiments.

Edmund Spenser (1552-1599)

Edmund Spenser ranks as the fore most English poet of the 16th century. Spenser is rightly called the poet‘s poet because all great poets of England have been indebted to him. Spenser was an English poet best known for The Faerie Queene, an epic poem and fantastical allegory celebrating the Tudor dynasty and Elizabeth I. His long allegorical poem *The Faerie Queene* is one of the greatest in the English language. It was written in what came to be called the Spenserian stanza. He is often considered one of the greatest poets in the English language.

The Faerie Queene (1590) can be read on various levels: as an allegory of the eternal struggle between good and evil in every form and as a historical allegory portraying the struggle between the pure Protestant traditions of England and the manifold threats of England's Roman Catholic neighbors. Allusions to contemporary political and religious controversies are numerous. The Faerie Queene, published during the Renaissance period, bridged medieval society with early modernity.

The Shepheardes Calender (1579) can be called the first work of the English literary Renaissance. Following the example of Virgil and of many later poets, Spenser was beginning his career with a series of eclogues (literally “selections,” usually short poems in the form of pastoral dialogues), in which various characters, in the guise of innocent and simple shepherds, converse about life and love in a variety of managed verse forms, formulating weighty—often satirical—opinions on questions of the day. *The Calender* consists of 12 eclogues, one named after each month of the year. This work uses the pastoral conventions as vehicles of allegorical and satirical allusions to contemporary political and religious problems, as well as to the poet's own life and loves.

Spenser’s reinvention of classical pastoral, *The Shepheardes Calendar,* was admired by Sir Philip Sidney as a major contribution to the development of English literature and national culture. His epic poem, *The Faerie Queene,* was written in honor of Queen Elizabeth I and in celebration of the Tudor dynasty. Along with Sidney, Spenser set out to create a body of work that could parallel the great works of European poets such as Dante, Petrarch,

and Boccaccio and extend the line of English literary culture began by Chaucer. Among Spenser's many contributions to English literature, he is the originator and namesake of the Spenserian stanza and the Spenserian sonnet.

Edmund Spenser (1552- 99), gifted English poetry some of the finest masterpieces such as "Shepheard's Calendar", "Faerie Queen", "Amoretti", "Four Hymns" and ''The Prothalamion". Spenser's finest poetry is characterized by sensuousness and picturesqueness. He is a matchless painter in words. His contribution to poetic style, diction and versification is memorable. He evolved a true poetic style which the succeeding generations of English poets used. The introduction of Spenserian stanza is Spenser's most remarkable contribution to poetry. Dryden freely acknowledged that Spenser has been his master in English. Wordsworth praises him as the embodiment of nobility, purity and sweetness. Byron, Shelley and Keats are his worthy followers. Therefore he is aptly called Poet's poet.

Amoretti, Sonnet 34

Like as a ship

Edmund Spenser's Amoretti (Italian for "Cupids") chronicles his courtship with his wife Elizabeth Boyle. It was originally published in (1595). *Amoretti* is a collection of poems, it includes a big number of sonnets, some expresses feelings of depression and anguish because of the loss of his beloved and others describing her beauty and his endless love between them. Those that he is talking about sad feelings in them, one of them is(sonnet 34)"*like as a ship*".

Sonnet 34 appears to describe a break in Spenser's relationship with Elizabeth; it seems like they had a fight and Spenser is waiting his time until she forgives him. Spenser uses the analogy of a ship losing its way during a storm to convey the separation between him and Elizabeth.

Like as a ship, that through the ocean wide,
By conduct of some star, doth make her way,
Whenas a storm hath dimmed her trusty guide,
Out of her course doth wander far astray:
So I, whose star, that won’t with her bright ray

Me to direct, with clouds is overcast,
Do wander now, in darkness and dismay,
Through hidden perils round about me placed;
Yet hope I well that, when this storm is past,
My Helice, the loadstar of my life,
Will shine again, and look on me at last,
With lovely light to clear my cloudy grief.
Till then I wander careful, comfortless,
In secret sorrow, and sad pensiveness.

Summary

The poet says my position is like a ship that sails through the wide ocean with the help and guidance of some star; but when that star is dimmed by a storm, the ship wanders astray from her course and thus loses the true direction. My condition is similar; the bright star that used to direct my way is now overcast with clouds, and I wander in darkness and dismay with hidden dangers surrounding me all around. Yet I am hopeful that when this storm is over, my Helice, the pole star of my life will shine again and look on me with lovely light and the clouds of grief will disappear. Till then I

wander, full of worries, comfortless in secret sorrow and pensiveness.

Analysis

Spenser draws heavily on Petrarch as regards the metaphors of sea voyages, sea storms and ships. As the ship goes astray when the pole stars disappears behind the clouds, so is the condition of the lover whose guiding star has disappeared leaving him in the stormy seas. Clouds of doubts, indecision and indifference have dimmed her sight. Perhaps she has lost all interest in him. The ship of his life is now in turbulence caused by desire and greed. He is surrounded by darkness and frustration.

Through the images of the sea and the storm Spenser tries to present sensual temptations that separate the lover from his beloved and destroy the bodily ship. Spenser uses the traditional allegory of the tempted ship of the body. Hidden perils recall Homer's Odyssey where Scylla and Charbydis endanger the passage of Odysseus's ship. The beloved is the bright star, God-figure or Christ who guides the lover, ennobles him so that he can attain divinity and be united with his beloved—with his God.

There are many temptations which do not enable the lover-ship to see the guiding star. Like storm-ridden ship, the lover is surrounded by doubts, despair and dismay and thus has drifted away from her and finds himself in a precarious situation. Here the poet combines or mixes the Platonic concept of an ideal woman (as the courtly lovers believed and presented their beloveds as angels, goddesses etc.) and the Christian concept of the union of the Christ and the Church. In order to attain divinity, the lover must check his passions and desires and become pure and virtuous. The hidden perils that now checkmate him will disappear as the guiding star reappears with the same glory and splendor. He hopes that the storm will soon blow over and his Helice will shine again as brightly as it did.

Thus there is note of optimism with which the poet consoles himself. However till the storm lasts, he has to bear with the tragic and miserable situation, full of cares and worries. The sonnet has religious connotations too. The sea stands for sensual pleasures. As long as the lover is engrossed in Worldly pleasures and is guided by stormy passions, he cannot be unified with his God—the beloved.

He must, like a true Christian, bear with suffering, and should not complain or grieve. Patience is the need. His guiding star will reappear and shine on him once again. But before that the lover has to undergo the ritual of purification—of all base and low sensual desires and appetites. Once his heart and mind are purified, his soul will be purified—and this ritual will pave the way, clear the storm, and bring his Helice once again original brilliance.

Form and Structure

This poem is a Spenserian sonnet which is composed of three quatrains and a final couplet. The rhyme pattern is abab bcbc cdcd ee written in iambic pentameter.

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586)

Sir Philip Sidney (1554- 86), experienced a brief life about thirty two years in which he penned some of the greatest works of the time. A scholar, critic, poet and courtier Sidney's work the sonnet sequence "Astrophel and Stella was published after his life time. "Astrophel" and Stella chronicle his hopeless love for Stella. Arcadia was written to amuse his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. It is a prose romance. Sidney's most important work is "Defence of Poesie" penned in early 1580s was also studied and appreciated later.

A poet, soldier and courtier, Philip Sidney was one of the most celebrated figures of the Elizabethan age. He was a member of a distinguished and talented family; his sister, Mary, the Countess of Pembroke, was a patron of writers and supported her brother as he wrote his great work, *Arcadia*.

Sidney was the most celebrated literary figure before Spenser and Shakespeare. As a man of letters he is remembered for Arcadia (a romance), Apology For Poetry (a collection of critical and literary principles) and Astrophel

and Stella (a collection of sonnets). These 108 love sonnets are the first direct expressions of personal feelings and experience in English poetry. He analyses the sequence of his feelings with a vividness and minuteness.

In *Astrophel and Stella*, first printed in 1591, Sidney expressed varying moods and intensities of passionate love, in imitation of Italian and French sonneteers of the Petrarchan tradition. Sidney's simple yet delicate verse is markedly superior to that of his contemporaries. His *Apology for Poetry* (first published in 1595) was the first major critical essay in Renaissance England. Sidney insisted on the ethical value of art. This critical essay, perhaps more than any other work, has assured Sidney's position in the history of literature. All three of his major works, however, hold an important place in one of the most brilliant eras of English literary creativity.

Astrophil and Stella, Sonnet 39

Come Sleep

Come Sleep! O Sleep, the certain knot of peace,

The baiting-place of wit, the balm of woe,

The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,

Th' indifferent judge between the high and low.

With shield of proof shield me from out the prease

Of those fierce darts despair at me doth throw:

O make in me those civil wars to cease;

I will good tribute pay, if thou do so.

Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,

A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,

A rosy garland and a weary head:

And if these things, as being thine by right,

Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me,

Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see.

“Come Sleep, O Sleep” is one of the 108 sonnets published by Sir Philip Sidney in his collection “Astrophil and Stella” published around 1582. The songs and sonnets in this collection tell the story of Astrophil (star-lover), and his hopeless passion for Stella (star). The 39th sonnet, “Come Sleep, O Sleep” tells us about sleep and its effects on men. It concludes with how Astrophil sees Stella clearly in a dream while sleeping.

Summary

The speaker is unable to sleep, so he invites sleep as if inviting a person, using all kinds of flattery. He praises sleep for all is quality, and for being an unbiased leveler who goes without minding whether rich or poor. Sydney explains sleep to a land of peace and tries to find peace and solace. Further, he describes sleep as a place of escape from the noise, light, and everything that make men weary. Finally, he concludes stating that sleep is livelier than reality, for he (Astrophel) can see Stella clearly.

Analysis

Lines 1 to 4

The sonnet Come Sleep! O Sleep begins with the speaker inviting the sleep to come. It looks like the sleep is not coming so he persuades it to come using a lot of flattery. He uses expensive descriptions like “certain knot of peace”, “baiting-place of wit”, “balm of woe”, “poor man’s wealth”, “prisoner’s release”, and “indifferent judge” to flatter Sleep. Sleep seems to be the place that is directly connected to peace. And also it is a place that lulls knowledge and

wisdom. In the lines following, the poet paradoxically uses sleep as “poor man’s wealth” and “prisoner’s release”, for it gives them relief from reality. Sleep is being a leveler, as death is a leveler in James Shirley’s poem “Death the Leveler”. Sleep comes equally to both rich and poor, to make everything even. Though Rich people can buy a lot of comforting things for sleep, the sleep they get is common.

Lines 5 to 8

In the second quatrain of the poem “Come Sleep, O Sleep” the poet or speaker seems to be desperate for sleep. He calls upon sleep to protect him with its ‘shield of proof’ from the “fierce darts” being thrown at him. Since the speaker of the poem is Astrophel the darts could be the ones from cupid, for he is love, that doesn’t allow him to get sleep. His love for the Stella is causing civil wars within him, so he expects the sleep to come and put an end to it. The fine line shows how desperate he is for sleep because he is even willing to bribe the sleep to come.

Lines 9 to 14

In the sestet of “Come Sleep, O Sleep” the speaker offers smooth pillows, sweetest bed, and a chamber, immune to sound and light to induce sleep. He readily offers “a rosy garland” and “weary head” too. To an ordinary person, this may be a tempting offer but to sleep, they are not. Logically, they are already the properties of sleep. At this time, the speaker realizes that they may not be sufficient to convince sleep. Ultimately, he gets an idea in the final couplet, and speaks confidently to “sleep”, if it agrees to come, he will grant an ultimate reward of seeing ‘Stella’.

Literary/ Poetic Devices

Apostrophe

An apostrophe is used in the title itself to make this poem sound more like a conversation between the speaker and “Sleep”. In the first line of the poem, the speaker directly addresses sleep, as if it is standing in front of him and willing not to come. He tries to convince as if one convinces a friend.

Personification

In the poem, “Sleep” is personified like a man who makes his choices. At the beginning of the poem, sleep has made up its mind not to come. Poet is desperate without sleep, so he had to uses whatever way sounds possible for him to lull sleep.

Metaphor

The poet has used several “Metaphors” to describe the quality and nature of sleep. The following metaphors like “certain knot of peace”, “baiting-place of wit”, “balm of woe”, “poor man’s wealth”, “prisoner’s release”, and “indifferent judge” are found in the first quatrain of the poem. The poet compares sleep to a judge who makes no distinction while making a judgment. Sleep is equally available to all despite their socio-economic situation.

Imagery

The poet uses the poetic technique “Imagery” while describing the inviting bed Chamber. It has “smooth pillows” and “sweetest bed”. It is also free from the “noise”

and “light”. Ironically, he has everything that is needed for a comfortable sleep, yet he has no sleep. This gives a picture of a man lying in the tossing around without sleep.

Paradox

In the third line of the poem “Come Sleep, O Sleep”, the poet paradoxically uses the terms “poor man”, “wealth”, “prisoner”, and “release”. The word ‘poor’ lexically means a person who has a little, and Prisoner, someone who is bound by the four walls of a prison. But here the poet remarks Sleep to be a wealth of a poor, and freedom from the world of prison to a prisoner.

Form and Structure

“Come Sleep! O Sleep” is a sonnet of 14 lines. Following the best known Petrarchan or Italian sonnet form there is a shift after octave in rhyme and in the subject matter. In the octave, the poet discusses what all things sleep offers to people. But, in the sestet, he discusses the possible things he can offer sleep it comes. In the concluding couple, he comes to an agreement with sleep to share the image of Stella, livelier in his sleep than in reality. The sonnet is

written in Iambic pentameter. Though it follows the structure of a Petrarchan sonnet, the rhyme scheme is of the Shakespearean sonnet form with ABABABAB, CDCDEFEFGG.

William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)

William Shakespeare was an English poet, playwright and actor of the Renaissance era. Shakespeare is widely recognized as the greatest English poet the world has ever known. Not only were his plays mainly written in verse, but he also penned 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems and a few other minor poems. Today he has become a symbol of poetry and writing internationally.

Shakespeare succeeded as a poet as much as in the theatre. His plays are wonderfully and poetically written, often in blank verse. And when he experienced a pause in his theatrical career about 1592–94, the plague having closed down much theatrical activity, he wrote poems. Venus and Adonis (1593) and The Rape of Lucrece (1594) are the only works that Shakespeare seems to have shepherded through the printing process. His first two books of poetry, *Venus and Adonis* and *Rape of Lucrece*, were reprinted many times. In fact, they were more popular in print than any of Shakespeare's plays.

Shakespeare's sonnets were composed between 1593 and 1601, though not published until 1609. That edition, *The Sonnets of Shakespeare*, consists of 154 sonnets, all

written in the form of Shakespearean sonnet. The sonnets fall into two groups: sonnets 1-126, addressed to a "fair youth", a handsome and noble young man, and sonnets 127-152, to a malignant but fascinating "Dark Lady," who the poet loves in spite of himself.

Shakespeare changed the world of poetry not only with his prolific use of this new form, but also in deviating from what was standard content. Instead of romantic fiction, written to an unattainable ideal woman, Shakespeare writes to a young man and a dark woman, who may or may not be attainable, and who arouse conflicting feelings in the speaker.

Sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

"Sonnet 18" is a sonnet written by English poet and playwright William Shakespeare. Like many of Shakespeare's sonnets, the poem is about the nature of beauty and with the capacity of poetry to represent that beauty. The poet is praising an anonymous person (usually believed to be a young man) through the poem.

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer’s lease hath all too short a date:

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimm’d;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance or nature’s changing course untrimm’d;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade

Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;

Nor shall Death brag thou wander’st in his shade,

When in eternal lines to time thou growest:

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

SONNET 18	PARAPHRASE
Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?	Shall I compare you to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:	You are more lovely and more constant:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,	Rough winds shake the beloved buds of May
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:	And summer is far too short:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,	At times the sun is too hot,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;	Or often goes behind the clouds;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,	And everything beautiful sometime will lose its beauty,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;	By misfortune or by nature's planned out course.
But thy eternal summer shall not fade	But your youth shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;	Nor will you lose the beauty that you possess;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,	Nor will death claim you for his own,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;	Because in my eternal verse you will live forever.
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,	So long as there are people on this earth,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.	So long will this poem live on, making you immortal.

Summary

The speaker opens the poem with a question addressed to the beloved: “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” The next eleven lines are devoted to such a comparison. In line 2, the speaker prescribes what mainly differentiates the young man from the summer’s day: he is “more lovely and more temperate.” Summer’s days tend toward extremes: they are shaken by “rough winds”; in them, the sun (“the eye of heaven”) often shines “too hot,” or too dim. And summer is fleeting: its date is too short, and it leads to the withering of autumn, as “every fair from fair sometime declines.” The final quatrain of the sonnet tells how the beloved differs from the summer in that respect: his beauty will last forever (“Thy eternal summer shall not fade...”) and never die. In the couplet, the speaker explains how the beloved’s beauty will accomplish this feat, and not die because it is preserved in the poem, which will last forever; it will live “as long as men can breathe or eyes can see.”

Commentary

This sonnet is certainly the most famous in the sequence of Shakespeare's sonnets; it may be the most famous lyric poem in English. On the surface, the poem is simply a statement of praise about the beauty of the beloved; summer tends to unpleasant extremes of windiness and heat, but the beloved is always mild and temperate. Summer is incidentally personified as the "eye of heaven" with its "gold complexion"; the imagery throughout is simple and unaffected, with the "darling buds of May" giving way to the "eternal summer", which the speaker promises the beloved.

Sonnet 18 is the first "rhyme"—the speaker's first attempt to preserve the young man's beauty for all time. An important theme of the sonnet is the power of the speaker's poem to defy time and last forever, carrying the beauty of the beloved down to future generations. The beloved's "eternal summer" shall not fade precisely because it is embodied in the sonnet: "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see," the speaker writes in the couplet, "So long lives this, and this gives life to thee."

Detailed Analysis

1. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

This is taken usually to mean 'What if I were to compare thee etc?' The stock comparisons of the loved one to all the beauteous things in nature hover in the background throughout. One also remembers Wordsworth's lines:

We'll talk of sunshine and of song,
And summer days when we were young,
Sweet childish days which were as long
As twenty days are now.

Such reminiscences are indeed anachronistic, but with the recurrence of words such as 'summer', 'days', 'song', 'sweet', it is not difficult to see the permeating influence of the Sonnets on Wordsworth's verse.

2. Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

The youth's beauty is more perfect than the beauty of a summer day. more temperate = more gentle, more restrained, whereas the summer's day might have violent excesses in store, such as are about to be described.

3. Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

May was a summer month in Shakespeare's time, because the calendar in use lagged behind the true sidereal calendar by at least a fortnight.

darling buds of May = the beautiful, much loved buds of the early summer; favorite flowers.

4. And summer's lease hath all too short a date:

Legal terminology. The summer holds a lease on part of the year, but the lease is too short, and has an early termination (date).

5. Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

Sometime = on occasion, sometimes;

the eye of heaven = the sun.

6. And often is his gold complexion dimmed,

his gold complexion = his (the sun's) golden face. It would be dimmed by clouds and on overcast days generally.

7. And every fair from fair sometime declines,

All beautiful things (every fair) occasionally become inferior in comparison with their essential previous state of beauty (from fair). They all decline from perfection.

8. By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed:

By chance accidents, or by the fluctuating tides of nature, which are not subject to control, nature's changing course untrimmed.

untrimmed - this can refer to the ballast (trimming) on a ship which keeps it stable; or to a lack of ornament and decoration. The greater difficulty however is to decide which noun this adjectival participle should modify. Does it refer to nature, or chance, or every fair in the line above, or to the effect of nature's changing course? KDJ adds a comma after course, which probably has the effect of directing the word towards all possible antecedents. She points out that nature's changing course could refer to women's monthly courses, or menstruation, in which case every fair in the previous line would refer to every fair woman, with the implication that the youth is free of this cyclical curse, and is therefore more perfect.

9. But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Referring forwards to the eternity promised by the ever living poet in the next few lines, through his verse.

10. Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,

Nor shall it (your eternal summer) lose its hold on that beauty which you so richly possess. ow'st = ownest, possess.

By metonymy we understand 'nor shall you lose any of your beauty'.

11. Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,

Several half echoes here. The biblical ones are probably 'Oh death where is thy sting? Or grave thy victory?' implying that death normally boasts of his conquests over life. And Psalms 23.3.: 'Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil ' In classical literature the shades flitted helplessly in the underworld like gibbering ghosts. Shakespeare would have been familiar with this through Virgil's account of Aeneas' descent into the underworld in Aeneid Bk. VI.

12. When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,

in eternal lines = in the undying lines of my verse. Perhaps with a reference to progeny, and lines of descent, but it seems that the procreation theme has already been abandoned.

to time thou grow'st = you keep pace with time, you grow as time grows.

13. So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
For as long as humans live and breathe upon the earth, for as long as there are seeing eyes on the eart.

14. So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.
That is how long these verses will live, celebrating you, and continually renewing your life. But one is left with a slight residual feeling that perhaps the youth's beauty will last no longer than a summer's day, despite the poet's proud boast.

Analysis

The speaker initially tries to find an appropriate **metaphor** to describe his beloved (traditionally believed to be a young man)—suggesting that he might be compared to a summer's day, the sun, or "the darling buds of May." Yet as the speaker searches for a metaphor that will adequately reflect his beloved's beauty, he realizes that none will work because all imply inevitable decline and death. Where the first eight lines of the poem document the failure of poetry's traditional resources to capture the young

man's beauty, the final six lines argue that the young man's eternal beauty is best compared to the poem *itself*.

The poem begins with the speaker suggesting a series of **similes** to describe the young man. In each case, he quickly lists reasons why the simile is inappropriate. For instance, if he compares the young man to a "summer's day," he has to admit that the metaphor fails to capture the young man's full beauty: he's more "lovely" and more "temperate." As the poem proceeds, though, the speaker's objections begin to shift. Instead of arguing that the young man's beauty exceeds whatever he's compared to, the speaker notes a dark underside to his own similes: they suggest impermanence and decay. To compare the young man to the summer implies that fall is coming. To compare him to the sun implies that night will arrive—and soon.

However, as the speaker notes in line 9, "thy eternal summer shall not fade." The young man's beauty is not subject to decay or change. Clichéd, natural metaphors fail to capture the permanence of the young man's beauty. To praise him, the poet needs to compare him to something that is *itself* eternal. For the speaker, that something is art. Like the young man's "eternal summer," the speaker's lines

(i.e., the lines of his poem) are similarly “eternal.” Unlike the summer or the sun, they will not change as time progresses. The speaker's lines are thus similar to the young man in a key respect: the poem itself manages to capture the everlasting quality of his beauty, something that the poem’s previous similes had failed to express. The poem itself will give eternal life to the young man: “So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”

The speaker thus thinks that poems are eternal objects—that they do not change or alter as they encounter new readers or new historical contexts. He also thinks that poetry possesses a set of special, almost magical powers. It not only describes, it preserves. The poem is thus not simply a way of cataloguing the young man’s beauty, it propagates it for future generations. The poem, then, ultimately asks its audience to reflect on the powers of poetry itself: the ways that it does and does not protect the young man against death, and the ways in which it preserves and creates beauty unmatched by the rest of the mortal world.

The Sun

In Renaissance love poetry, the sun is often used as a symbol for physical or personal beauty. Because the sun is the source of all light—and life—comparing someone or something to the sun suggests that they are unusually, even exceptionally beautiful.

In "Sonnet 18," the speaker considers comparing the young man to the sun, but rejects the comparison, noting that the sun's beauty is often dimmed by clouds. To reject this metaphor is to say that the young man is more beautiful than the sun because his beauty is more eternal.

Form

"Sonnet 18" is a Shakespearean sonnet, meaning it has 14 lines written in iambic pentameter and that follow a regular rhyme scheme. This rhyme scheme can be divided into three quatrains followed by a couplet. The sonnet has the regular rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. All of the end-of-line rhymes are full with the exception of temperate/date.

Sonnet 127

In the old age black was not counted fair,

Or if it were it bore not beauty's name:

But now is black beauty's successive heir,

And beauty slandered with a bastard shame,

For since each hand hath put on nature's power,

Fairing the foul with art's false borrowed face,

Sweet beauty hath no name no holy bower,

But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.

Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,

Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem,

At such who not born fair no beauty lack,

Slandering creation with a false esteem,

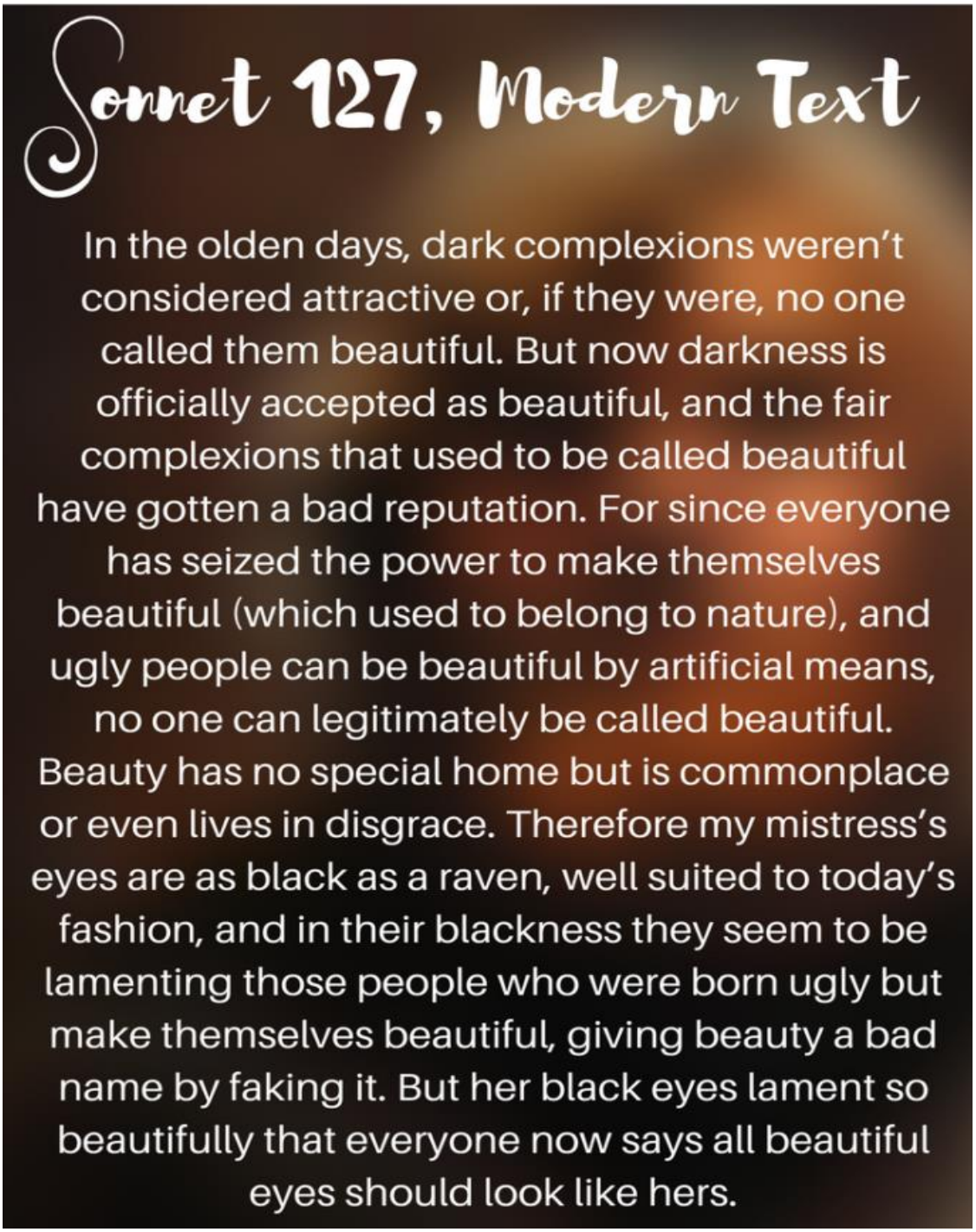
Yet so they mourn becoming of their woe,

That every tongue says beauty should look so.

SONNET 127	PARAPHRASE
In the old age black was not counted fair,	In the old days black was not considered beautiful,
Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;	or not said to be,
But now is black beauty's successive heir,	but now black is thought beautiful,
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame.	and true beauty has become mother to a bastard.
For since each hand hath put on Nature's power,	For now everyone does Nature's work,
Fairing the foul with Art's false borrowed face,	making ugly fair with cosmetics,
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,	Beauty's good name is lost, it has no refuge,
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.	but is slandered and disgraced.
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,	This is why my lady's eyes are black,
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem	for she is grieving
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,	that ugliness
Sland'ring creation with a false esteem.	slanders creation by being considered beautiful.
Yet so they mourn becoming of their woe,	Yet her eyes mourning are so becoming
That every tongue says beauty should look so.	that everyone thinks that is what true beauty should be.

Sonnet 127: Translation to modern English

In ancient times a dark complexion wasn't considered beautiful, or if anyone thought so they never said it. But now being dark is legitimately beautiful and it's become less legitimate to call being fair-skinned beautiful in itself because these days anyone can take on the power that used to belong only to nature, and even unattractive people can make themselves beautiful with makeup. True beauty doesn't exist anymore, has no special place: it has become devalued, even disgraced. And so, my mistress' eyes are raven black – well suited to current fashion – seeming to be in mourning for those who are not naturally beautiful but insult nature by making themselves beautiful. But her eyes are so beautiful in their sadness that everyone is saying that that's how beauty should look.


Sonnet 127, Modern Text
In the olden days, dark complexions weren't considered attractive or, if they were, no one called them beautiful. But now darkness is officially accepted as beautiful, and the fair complexions that used to be called beautiful have gotten a bad reputation. For since everyone has seized the power to make themselves beautiful (which used to belong to nature), and ugly people can be beautiful by artificial means, no one can legitimately be called beautiful. Beauty has no special home but is commonplace or even lives in disgrace. Therefore my mistress's eyes are as black as a raven, well suited to today's fashion, and in their blackness they seem to be lamenting those people who were born ugly but make themselves beautiful, giving beauty a bad name by faking it. But her black eyes lament so beautifully that everyone now says all beautiful eyes should look like hers.

Summary

In Sonnet 127 the speaker discusses the way blackness and darkness have been viewed. In times past, black was not considered beautiful ("not counted fair"), or if it was, it was not called as such. But now black is considered to be beautiful: "But now is black beauty's successive heir." Then, the speaker says beauty is slandered with bastardy, or illegitimacy, since women put cosmetics on their faces—"Fairing the foul with art's false borrowed face"—making what is ugly beautiful through artificial means. True beauty has been bastardized and called into question. The speaker says that he has therefore chosen a mistress whose eyes are black and seem to be in mourning for those who use makeup to falsely disguise their natural darkness ("Sland'ring creation with a false esteem"), distorting what nature has created by covering it up with artificial cosmetics. Her black eyes look so suited to mourning that everyone says that's the way beauty should look.

Commentary

Sonnet 127 is the beginning of the Dark Lady sonnet sequence which ended with the final sonnet 154. The first

sonnet sounds programmatically: The mistress is black and still beautiful, while other women corrupt through plastic deceit. This sonnet is a complaint against cosmetics. The addressed woman is beautiful because of her naturalness and she does not need any artificial improvements. The poem shows that even if the writers´ mistress is no prettiness of her time his love for her is very strong. The 127th sonnet of this sequence might also tell that Shakespeare contradicts with the existing ideal of beauty.

Sonnet 127 consists of 14 lines of iambic pentameter which divide into three quatrains and one couplet. Shakespeare prefers to keep his quatrains district by putting a punctuation point at the end of each. He seldom works with enjambments and prefers to make each line an idea or point. Also, “he is very fond of the clinching final couplet”. The quatrains possess the rhyme scheme of an alternate rhyme (ABAB CDCD EFEF) and the couplet is a rhyming one (GG). Shakespeare ever used this traditional sonnet form, which he never varied, except by repeating a rhyme. Every rhyme in this sonnet is also an end rhyme and a perfect rhyme. The consonance of words is mainly

masculine, except lines eight and twelve. There the rhymed words are feminine: “disgrace” and “esteem”.

Analysis

Sonnet 127 is the first of what is known as the dark lady sonnets, poems that praise a woman who is described as having dark hair, dark eyes, and perhaps dark skin, in contradiction of the classical standards of beauty celebrated by Shakespeare's contemporaries, which included blonde hair, blue eyes, and pale, white skin with slightly rosy cheeks.

The word *fair* was used to refer to pale skin considered the standard of feminine beauty, but it also meant "beautiful," which complicates the meaning of some lines of this sonnet. To complicate things further, "fair" also meant "good," the opposite of "foul." There is clearly a play on the word *fair* in **line 1**: black was not considered beautiful, but it also was not considered pale-skinned.

In **line 2** the speaker asserts that if black were considered "fair," or beautiful, "it bore not beauty's name," meaning either that people did not call it beautiful or that it was not a legitimate heir of "beauty."

Notions of bastardy and inheritance are used metaphorically in the sonnet. Bastardy refers to the practice of labeling a person legitimate or illegitimate depending on whether or not the person is born to parents who are legally married. In Shakespeare's time, matters of legitimacy affected inheritance rights. In **line 3** "black" is called the legitimate heir (with a possible pun on "hair") of beauty. The metaphor of bastardy and inheritance continues in **lines 4, 5**, **and 12** in which beauty is depicted as bastardized, or illegitimate, because of the use of cosmetics. The speaker seems to despise the notion of using cosmetics to disguise the complexion, describing it as an action that "sland[ers] creation with a false esteem." The speaker is effectively likening wearing cosmetics to spreading rumors and lies, having a false sense of high self-worth, and carrying the shame of being an illegitimate child.

Shakespeare uses juxtaposition and echo throughout the sonnet to highlight some of the key concepts. In **line 3**, his inverted word order seems to force together the words *black beauty*, as if to create a new definition of beauty, when in reality, the word *black* is the subject of the verb *is* that precedes it. The word *successive* (meaning

"legitimate") in **line 3** is paralleled by its opposite counterpart, *bastard* in the same position in **line 4**. **Line 6** juxtaposes the antonyms *fair* and *foul* with the use of the neologistic, or use of a new word, *fairing*, which seems to be a variant echo of the common word *fouling*. This pairing evokes the famous lines from Act 1, Scene 1 of *Macbeth* (written 1606–07), in which the Weird Sisters chant, "Fair is foul and foul is fair," indicating that they will be creating such confusion that people will not know good from evil. This seems to be the kind of confusion that has been created by the use of cosmetics: "Sweet beauty hath no name, ... / But is profaned."

Many editors see the repetition of *eyes* in **lines 9 and 10** as an error, and substitute *brows* for one or the other occurrence. It would seem to make more sense if the poem read, for example, "my mistress' eyes are raven black, / Her [brow] so suited," meaning that her brows are wearing the same color as her eyes. In any case, the eyes are mourning those who, because they are not born fair, feel they have to use cosmetics to appear so. Finally, in **line 13**, "becoming of their woe" can mean that her eyes wear the color suited to

mourning, or that her black eyes are becoming, or attractive looking.

Detailed Analysis

1. In the old age black was not counted fair,

In the old age = in olden times.

black = dark, brunette.

The ideal of female beauty in Renaissance literature and sonnets is a blonde. This ideal possibly goes back to the ancient world, and Helen of Troy. However blackness was not seen as entirely undesirable, and is praised even in the The Song of Solomon.

I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me, they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept. 1.5-6.

It may be that the old age refers back only to the reign of Elizabeth, whose fair reddish hair was chivalrously considered to be the ideal of female beauty. As she grew older she relied much on thick cosmetics and wigs.

Shakespeare could be taking a swipe here at that practice, which he seems to have disliked intensely.
not counted fair = was not considered beautiful.

2. Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;
it bore not beauty's name = it did not have the reputation of being beautiful, it was not called beautiful.
The line is almost contradictory, for it seems to say 'if black was beautiful, it was not beautiful', but mentally one supplies the extra links to give 'if it were in fact considered to be beautiful it nevertheless was not given the appellation'.

3. But now is black beauty's successive heir,
successive heir = succeeding to, inheriting her (beauty's) title. Probably with a pun also on 'hair'.

4. And beauty slandered with a bastard shame:
slandered = given a bad reputation.
a bastard shame = a shame caused by the bastardy of blackness, which is not the true child of beauty; a shame attached to the name of bastard, since beauty itself is now no longer genuine, but of false parentage, i.e. cosmetics (as explained in the next two lines).

5. For since each hand hath put on Nature's power,

put on Nature's power = taken over the power of Nature to allocate beauty.

The phrasing is suggestive of applying powder or rouge or white lead to the face, as if Nature's power could be equated with a thick layering of cosmetics.

6. Fairing the foul with Art's false borrowed face,

Fairing the foul = making beautiful what is ugly

Art's false borrowed face = the artificial face put on by the use of cosmetics, and the skillful application of them.

7. Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,

hath no name = has no renown, as all beauty is now, or could be, artificial; has lost her claim to being called 'beauty'; has lost her name through the shame of being bastardized; has lost her name through being slandered, having now been made black, instead of fair.

no holy bower = no sacred precinct in which to be worshipped. Gods and goddesses of antiquity had holy bowers and groves set aside and dedicated to them. Shrines would often be erected to them in such places.

8. But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.

profaned = cast out of the temple, barred from the holy places. From the Latin word profanus meaning 'before i.e. outside the sanctuary or temple'.

if not lives in disgrace = It is not clear what is the worse penalty, to be pronounced profane, or to live in disgrace. They probably mean approximately the same thing, although, since one is dealing with the abstract and fanciful idea of beauty as a goddess, one need not insist too rigidly on an exact meaning. It is interesting that the word is an echo from the previous sonnet, in which Nature supposedly disgraces Time by protecting the youth. Here Art has disgraced Nature by making false effigies of beauty. disgrace could also mean 'to make ugly, to disfigure'.

9. Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,

Therefore = the logical connection between the color of his mistress' eyes and what has been described in the previous eight lines is not clear.

It seems that one is meant to understand that the eyes are in mourning for the death of beauty, and are therefore clothed in black. But since we assume that black is their natural color, they cannot have put on mourning weeds for

this occasion only, unless they also are guilty of disguising their true color. The poet is evolving a fanciful conceit that his mistress' eyes became aware of how others were bastardising true beauty and therefore put on mourning in sympathy with her.

raven black = black like a raven's feathers.

10. Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem

Her eyes = many editors emend to her brows, or her hair, to avoid the rather banal repetition of 'eyes'. It also explains the phrase so suited, which would mean 'dressed in a similar fashion'. Alternatively one could change eyes in the line above to brows. The fact that her hair is black is indicated by 130:

If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

suited = a pun on sooted is possibly intended.

11. At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,

mourners / at such who = the modern idiom would be 'mourners for'. Those referred to are the ones who, lacking natural beauty, make up for it by adorning themselves with cosmetics.

12. Sland'ring creation with a false esteem:

Slandering creation = by falsely interfering with natural beauty, slanderously indicating that created things are bad.

esteem = estimation, valuation. By painting themselves other than they are, they create a false estimation of their worth.

13. Yet so they mourn becoming of their woe,

so they mourn = they mourn in such a way that; they mourn so intensely. they = sc. my mistress' eyes.

becoming of their woe = their appearance is ideally suited to their grief. Presumably, his mistress' eyes, which are naturally black, look like true and fitting mourners for beauty slandered by false devotees.

14. That every tongue says beauty should look so.

Every tongue = everyone. Compare:

All tongues, the voice of souls, give thee that due, 69.

beauty should look so = beauty should look just like your eyes look; beauty should look like you; you are now the true icon of beauty.

17th Century Poetry

Two forces opposed each other in 17th century England over a range of cultural, religious and political issues. One group, members of royalty or royal sympathizers, supported the reign of Charles I. The other group consisted of deeply religious people who were mostly middle class and sympathetic to a Puritan form of Protestantism. Most, but not all, 17th century English poets wrote from the perspective of one of these two groups. The royalists were known as "Cavalier poets," and the religious poets were referred to as "Metaphysical poets. "

In the beginning of the seventeenth century, a new school of poetry started surfacing in reaction to the Elizabethan poetic convention. This kind of poetry is known as the Metaphysical School of Poetry. It emerged in the periods known as Jacobean Age (1603-1625) and Caro-line Age (1625-1649). Despite diversity, the Elizabethan literature was marked by the spirit of unity, which resulted from intense patriotism and nationalism of all classes, and their devotion and loyalty to the Queen who had a single-minded mission to seek the nation‘s welfare. During this

period James I and Charles II were hostile to the interests of the people. The country was divided by the struggle for political and religious liberty, and the literature was divided in spirit as were the struggling parties.

The Metaphysical poetry deals with philosophical ideas. In dealing with abstract ideas or concepts, metaphysical poetry uses logic as it is done in philosophy. It mainly deals with the concept of love, faith, soul, death and God, which do not have concrete existence. It profusely uses logical arguments instead of only emotion or passion. Even in using passion, metaphysical poets used arguments. In addition, these poets used wit and conceits very frequently in their poems, with the effect of surprise and stun. They preferred conversational tone to the formal one, and they often ignored the formal use of metres and rhymes. The major poets of this school of poetry were Donne, Andrew Marvel, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, and Richard Crashaw.

A small group of poets called **Cavalier Poets** wrote in this period. The Cavalier poets, members of the aristocracy, wrote in the 17th century and supported King Charles I, who

was later executed as a result of a civil war. They were known as Royalists. Many of the poems centered around sensual, romantic love and also the idea of carpe diem, which means to 'seize the day.' To the Cavalier poet, enjoying life was far more important than following moral codes. They lived for the moment.

Cavalier poetry mirrored the attitudes of courtiers. The meaning of cavalier is showing arrogant or offhand disregard; dismissive or carefree and nonchalant; jaunty. This describes the attitude of Cavalier poets.

These poets opposed metaphysical poetry, such as that of John Donne. While poets like John Donne wrote with a spiritual, scientific, and moral focus, the Cavalier poets concentrated on the pleasures of the moment. Metaphysical poets also wrote in figurative, lofty language, while the Cavaliers were simple, being more apt to say what they meant in clear terms. The Cavalier poet wrote short, refined verses, and the tone of Cavalier poetry was generally easy-going.

A marked reaction against the peculiar poetry began in the age that followed it. This age was dominated by John

Milton. For this reason, it is called the **Age of Milton**. It is also called the **Puritan Age**. Puritanism exercised great influence upon the tone and temper of English life and thought. The spirit which it introduced was fine and noble, but it was hard and stern. During the Puritan role of Cromwell severe laws were passed. Simple pleasures were forbidden, theatres were closed. Puritanism destroyed human culture and sought to confine it within the circumscribed field of its own particular interests. It was fatal both to art and literature. Great literature could not be produced during this period. Milton was an exception. He was the greatest literary genius of this era. In his finest works he combines the moral and religious influences of Puritanism with the generous culture of the Renaissance.

THE Metaphysical Poets

A century after the dominance of the Elizabethan era, a refined, a more provocative lyric poetry movement swept England with greater depth in its verse. The **Metaphysical** School of Poetry of the 17th century immediately followed the wane of Elizabethan. The term ‘metaphysical’ came from Dryden who described the poetry of John Donne as ‘affecting the metaphysics’. However, the term ‘metaphysical poets’ was coined by Dr. Johnson who applied the term to describe a loose group of English lyric poets of the 17th century. In *The Lives of the Poets*, Johnson stated that about the beginning of the 17th century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets”.

The word metaphysics itself is combined of two words, "meta" which is interpreted as "after" and "physics" which resembles matter, therefore the combined word is interpreted as after matter or behind physics, metaphysical poetry discusses subjects further behind the physical state, and focuses on the philosophical aspect, for example, spiritual and religious topics, such as the journey of life and

whom to turn to and how to turn, associated with significant anxiety of the future, or discussing consciousness and the human awareness, along with the purpose of life in the form of rhymed and well-toned poetry. Metaphysical poetry often discusses religious topics and concerns, which represent a significant aspect of spiritual poetry.

Unlike the Elizabethan poets, metaphysical poets drew their metaphors from philosophy, theology, and science, rather than nature. Their emphasis was on analyzing emotion, not expressing it. The works of metaphysical poets dealt with darker subjects and thus demanded more from the reader. The metaphysical poets were drawn to darker subject matter. In their works, they explored the meaning of life and the individual's relationship with God. Like so many other English people of this time, these men were torn between the dictations of the church and their own intuitions. It is not surprising, therefore, that these poets wrote many sermons, prayers, and other religious works during this period.

Metaphysical poetry is a term applied to the poetry written by **John Donne**, **George Herbert**, **Andrew Marvell**, **Henry Vaughan, Richard Crashaw** and other 17th century

English poets, who are distinguished by ingenuity, intellectuality and sometimes obscurity. The metaphysical poetry is characterized by its intellectual and unconventional use of language. The Metaphysical poets wrote both secular and religious poetry. While the **secular poetry** deals with the experience of contemporary voyages and discoveries, theories of humanists and scientists the **religious verse** deals with the contemporary religious debate, questions of faith and spiritual allegiance. The Metaphysical poetry is a combination of two diverse elements—intellect and emotion. The themes occupying the Metaphysical poetry range from serious philosophical issues to common ones as love and death.

John Donne‘s works include Satires, Songs and Sonnets and Elegies. His poetry is classified into three categories – amorous, religious and satirical. His poetry reveals a depth of philosophy, a subtlety of reasoning, a blend of thought and devotion, the light and the serious, which make it full of variety and surprise. Donne‘s poetry bears the stamp of his scholarship. His images are far-fetched, obscure, unusual and striking.

George Herbert is the most widely read of all the metaphysical poets. His poems were published posthumously. His poetry is distinguished by clearness of expression, concrete imagery and intelligible conceits. He preferred simple, homely, racy language and naturalness of expression. His poetry is sensitive to the most delicate changes of feeling.

Richard Crashaw was both secular and religious in his poetry. His best work is Steps to the Temple (1646). His poetry is noticeable for striking but fantastic conceits, for its religious fire and fervor. It is emotional rather than thoughtful.

Henry Vaughan was at heart a mystic. His regard for nature has a closeness and penetration that sometimes suggest Wordsworth.

Abraham Cowley distinguished himself as a classical scholar. His well-known poems are The Mistress and the Pindaric Odes. He is important as a transitional poet of this period. He was the last of the metaphysical poets and in many respects he foreshadows the English classicists. His lyrics are often sweet and graceful.

Metaphysical poetry of the 17th century is **characterized by** a strong dependence on irony and paradox. Metaphysical poets worked on the Elizabethan symbols and developed a tested device called conceit. **Conceit**, which is known as a complex and interesting metaphor, was used to draw comparisons between two elements, which could not be conventionally associated together .

➔Common Features of Metaphysical Poetry:

- Themes: Metaphysical poetry is spiritual & has often religious themes. Moreover, it focuses on love, as the union of soul.
- Literary Devices: Metaphysical poetry uses metaphors, puns, paradoxes & meter to create drama & tension. In addition, Metaphysical poetry uses scientific, medical & legal words & phrases to create arguments about the philosophical aspect of life.
- Poets: Metaphysical poets were men of high intellect. They were all graduated from Oxford University, Cambridge University or they studied at one of the Inns of Court in the city of London. With the help of their vast knowledge, they presented new ideas & stories to their

readers. It employs unusual images taken from different fields of knowledge history, geography, astronomy, alchemy, mathematics etc.

- Ambiguity: Metaphysical poetry is considered highly ambiguous & obscure due to high intellect & knowledge of metaphysical poets. The poetry is greatly challenging to understand at the first reading. It needs full concentration & full attention to getting to the roots of the matter.
- Metaphysical Conceits: Metaphysical poetry also sought to shock the reader and wake him or her up from his or her normal existence in order to question the unquestionable. The poetry often mixed ordinary speech with paradoxes and puns. The results were strange, comparing unlikely things, such as lovers to a compass or the soul to a drop of dew. These weird comparisons were called conceits.

Metaphysical poetry employs bold and ingenious conceits, also called metaphysical conceits. Johnson called it “A combination of dissimilar images”. A significant feature of metaphysical poetry is the use of metaphysical conceits. A conceit is an unusual or surprising analogy, metaphor, or simile – a kind of extended metaphor which

metaphysical poets often use in their poetry. A conceit is a comparison of two dissimilar things, which may have very little in common. Metaphysical poetry also sought to shock the reader and wake him or her up from his or her normal existence in order to question the unquestionable. The poetry often mixed ordinary speech with paradoxes and puns. The results were strange, comparing unlikely things, such as lovers to a compass or the soul to a drop of dew. These weird comparisons were called conceits.

• Wit: Perhaps the most common characteristic is that metaphysical poetry contained large doses of wit. In fact, although the poets were examining serious questions about the existence of God or whether a human could possibly perceive the world, the poets were sure to ponder those questions with humor.

Metaphysical wit is also a noteworthy feature of metaphysical poetry. Metaphysical wit is the expression of one's idea & thoughts, using the words & various figures of speech in such a manner as to provide pleasure to the readers. Perhaps the most common characteristic is that metaphysical poetry contained large doses of wit. In fact, although the poets were examining serious questions

about the existence of God or whether a human could possibly perceive the world, the poets were sure to ponder those questions with humor. Colloquial Speech: Another feature of much metaphysical poetry – and something that sets it apart from much other verse of the period – is its colloquial speech. Not all metaphysical poets used more informal or conversational diction in their work, but in something like John Donne's '*The Canonization*' shows how colloquial language was put to good use by some metaphysical poets: "For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,"

• Platonic Love: Platonic love is another feature of metaphysical poetry. Platonic love means, spiritual love, which is free from elements of physical love.

John Donne (1572 – 1631)

John Donne was an English poet, satirist, lawyer and priest. He is considered the representative of the metaphysical poets. His works are noted for their strong, sensual style and include sonnets, love poetry, religious poems, Latin translations, epigrams, elegies, songs, satires and sermons. His poetry is noted for its vibrancy of language and creativity of metaphor. Donne's style is characterized by abrupt openings and various paradoxes, ironies and dislocations. These features, along with his frequent dramatic or everyday speech rhythms, his tense syntax and his tough eloquence, were both a reaction against the smoothness of conventional Elizabethan poetry. Another important theme in Donne’s poetry is the idea of true religion, something that he spent much time considering and theorizing about. He wrote secular poems as well as love poems. He is particularly famous for his mastery of metaphysical conceits.

Donne is considered a master of the metaphysical conceit, an extended metaphor that combines two vastly different ideas into a single idea, often using imagery. An example of this is his equation of lovers with saints in "The

Canonization". Unlike the conceits found in other Elizabethan poetry, most notably Petrarchan conceits, which formed clichéd comparisons between more closely related objects (such as a rose and love), metaphysical conceits go to a greater depth in comparing two completely unlike objects. One of the most famous of Donne's conceits is found in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" where he compares two lovers who are separated to the two legs of a compass.

Donne's works are also witty, employing paradoxes, puns, and subtle yet remarkable analogies. His pieces are often ironic and cynical, especially regarding love and human motives. Common subjects of Donne's poems are love (especially in his early life), death (especially after his wife's death), and religion.

Towards the end of his life Donne wrote works that challenged death, and the fear that it inspired in many men, on the grounds of his belief that those who die are sent to Heaven to live eternally. One example of this challenge is his Holy Sonnet X, Death Be Not Proud, from which come the famous lines “Death, be not proud, though some have called thee / Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so.” Even

as he lay dying in 1631, he rose from his sickbed and delivered the Death's Duel sermon, which was later described as his own funeral sermon. Death’s Duel portrays life as a steady descent to suffering and death, yet sees hope in salvation and immortality through an embrace of God, Christ and the Resurrection.

Holy Sonnet 10

Death, be not proud

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee

Mighty and dreadful, for thou are not so;

For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow

Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,

Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,

And soonest our best men with thee do go,

Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.

Thou'art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,

And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,

And poppy'or charms can make us sleep as well

And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?

One short sleep past, we wake eternally,

And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

Commentary

"*Holy Sonnet 10*," often referred to as "*Death, Be Not Proud*," was written by John Donne in 1609 and first published in 1633. The poem is a direct address to death, arguing that it is powerless because it acts merely as a "short sleep" between earthly living and the eternal afterlife—in essence, death is nothing to fear. The sonnet written mostly in iambic pentameter and is part of a series known as Donne's "Holy Sonnets"(or "Divine Meditations"/ "Divine Sonnets"). In keeping with these other poems, "Holy Sonnet 10" is a devotional lyric that looks at life's biggest questions in the context of Donne's religious beliefs.

The speaker directly addresses and personifies Death, telling it not to be arrogant just because some people find death scary and intimidating. In fact, death is neither of these things because people don't really die when death

comes to them; nor will the speaker truly die when death arrives for him.

Comparing death to rest and sleep—which are like images of death—the speaker anticipates death to be even more pleasurable than these activities. Furthermore, it's often the best people who go with death—which represents nothing more than the resting of the body and the arrival of the soul in the afterlife.

Death is fully controlled by fate and luck, and often administered by rulers or people acting desperately. The speaker points out that death is also associated with poison, war, and illness. Drugs and magic spells are more effective than death when it comes to rest. With all this in mind, what possible reason could death have for being so puffed up with pride?

Death is nothing but a mere sleep in between people's earthly lives and the eternal afterlife, in which death can visit them no more. It is instead death—or a certain idea of death as something to be scared of—that is going to die.

Analysis

The first quatrain focuses on the subject and audience of this poem: death. By addressing Death, Donne makes it/him into a character through personification. The poet warns death to avoid pride (line 1) and reconsider its/his position as a "Mighty and dreadful" force (line 2). He concludes the introductory argument of the first quatrain by declaring to death that those it claims to kill "Die not" (line 4), and neither can the poet himself be stricken in this way.

The second quatrain, which is closely linked to the first through the abba rhyme scheme, turns the criticism of Death as less than fearful into praise for Death's good qualities. From Death comes "Much pleasure" (line 5) since those good souls whom Death releases from earthly suffering experience "Rest of their bones" (line 6).

The third quatrain revolves around Donne's criticism of Death for thinking too highly of itself: Death is no sovereign, but a "slave to Fate, chance, kings, and desperate men" (line 9); this last demonstrates that there is no hierarchy in which Death is near the top. Although a desperate man can choose Death as an escape from earthly suffering, even the

rest which Death offers can be achieved better by “poppy, or charms” (line 11), so even there Death has no superiority.

The final couplet caps the argument against Death. Not only is Death the servant of other powers and essentially impotent to truly kill anyone, but also Death is itself destined to die when, as in the Christian tradition, the dead are resurrected to their eternal reward. Here Donne echoes the sentiment of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15:26, where Paul writes that “the final enemy to be destroyed is death.” Donne taps into his Christian background to point out that Death has no power and one day will cease to exist.

Literary Devices

Personification: Personification means to attribute human features to non-human things. Donne has personified death throughout the poem, stating it should not be proud. Being proud is a human quality. Hence, death is given a human quality of having feelings and emotions.

Metaphor: There are three metaphors in this poem. The first is used in the opening line “Death, be not proud.” Here death is compared to a proud man. The second is used in

the ninth line, “Thou art slave to fate.” In the last line in an extended metaphor where death is compared to the non-existent or unrealistic object.

Metonymy: Metonymy is a type of metaphor in which an object is used to describe something closely related to it. In this poem, “poppy” and “charm” are used to produce gentle sleep or death.

Irony: Irony means a statement that may mean something different from, or the opposite of, what is written. Irony often expresses something other than their literal intention, often in a humorous. For example: “Death, thou shalt die.”

Assonance: Assonance is the repetition of the vowel sounds in the same line of poetry such as the sound of /a/ in “Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,” and the sound of /e/ in “And soonest our best men with thee do go.”

Alliteration: Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonant sounds in the same lines of the poetry such as the use of /th/ in “And better than thy stroke; why swell’st thou then” and /m/ sound in “Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow.”

Form, Meter, & Rhyme Scheme

"Death, not be proud" is a **sonnet**, and is specifically close to the Petrarchan variety. This sonnet is grouped into two main sections, the octet (8 lines comprised of 2 quatrains) and the sestet, where the poem "turns" to offer its perspective on what has come before. The turn in this poem is subtle, as it is primarily an intensification of the argument against death as a powerful force. This is a deliberate strategy that allows the argument to build increasing momentum towards the poem's concluding question of line 12 and the following 2 lines' response.

The ending of the poem also represents a departure from the Petrarchan sonnet in that Donne writes a concluding couplet, which is more in keeping with the Shakespearean sonnet form. This final couplet allows for a further shift in the poem, this time to state, as clearly as possible, the reason why death is powerless: the eternal afterlife. The poem can thus be thought of both as an octet and a sestet, and as three quatrains and a couplet.

The meter in "death, be not proud" is iambic pentameter throughout, with a few instances of variation.

The rhyme scheme of the first 8 lines (the octet) follows the pattern: ABBAABBA. This is the typical scheme found in Petrarchan sonnets. But the sestet diverges from the Petrarchan set-up and rhymes: CDDCEE

In terms of rhyme, then, the poem can be divided into three quatrains (two of which form the octet) and an ending couplet. The development towards the couplet at the end lends force to the conclusion, which is making the bold claim that Death itself will die (because of the afterlife).

George Herbert (1593–1633)

George Herbert was one of the greatest poets of the seventeenth century, one of the greatest devotional poets in the English language, and one of a group that Samuel Johnson identified as the ‘Metaphysical poets’. Being born into an artistic and wealthy family, he received a good education that led to his holding prominent positions at Cambridge University and Parliament. As a student at Trinity College, Cambridge, Herbert excelled in languages and music. He went to college with the intention of becoming a priest, but his scholarship attracted the attention of King James I/VI. Herbert served in Parliament for two years. After the death of King James Herbert's interest was renewed. In 1630, in his late thirties he gave up his secular ambitions and took holy orders in the Church of England, spending the rest of his life as a rector.

Throughout his life, he wrote religious poems characterized by a creative use of imagery or conceits that was favored by the metaphysical school of poets. Herbert himself, in a letter to Nicholas Ferrar, said of his writings, "they are a picture of spiritual conflicts between God and my soul before I could subject my will to Jesus, my Master".

In 1633 Herbert finished a collection of poems entitled *The Temple* where themes of God and love are treated by Herbert as much as psychological forces as metaphysical phenomena. Suffering from poor health, Herbert died of tuberculosis only three years after taking holy orders. On his deathbed, he reportedly gave the manuscript of The Temple to his friend Nicholas Ferrar, a fellow clergyman, asking him to publish them if he thought they were worthy and would contribute to people's spiritual advancement. Ferrar indeed published the poems that year.

As a poet, Herbert was not considered as famous as his counterparts. However, he is an important figure because he created an image of religious and political stability in his writing during a difficult period. His writing of “The Temple” crowned him the name Holy Mr. Herbert.

Virtue

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,

The bridal of the earth and sky;

The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,

For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue angry and brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye;
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie;
My music shows ye have your closes,
And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like season'd timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives.

Commentary

"Virtue" is one of the poems in a collection of verse called *The Temple* (1633), which George Herbert wrote during the last three years of his life. Herbert's poems are lyrical and harmonious, reflecting the gentle voice of a country parson spreading the Christian message. He

appreciates the beauty of creation not only for its own sake but also because he sees it as a mirror of the goodness of the Creator.

George Herbert’s poem entitled “Virtue” is a poem from his collection of poems under the title of the “Death and Mutability”. The poems of this collection convey the idea that all beautiful, sweet, pleasant and good looking things in the world are mortal and it is certain that they will come to an end.

The poem has the theme of mortality which shows that everything dies, the theme of nature which shows that every natural things hold a very high degree of beauty, and the theme of supremacy of death over many things that exist. Implicit in "Virtue" is a delicately expressed struggle between rebellion and obedience. The understated conflict lies between the desire to experience worldly pleasures and the desire—or as Herbert would insist, the need—to surrender to the will of God.

Herbert's poetry displays a conjunction of intellect and emotion. Carefully crafted structures, like the first three quatrains, or four-line stanzas, of "Virtue," all of which are

similarly formed, contain sensuously perceived content, like depictions of daytime, nightfall, a rose, and spring. Such a combination of intellect and emotion, in which the two forces, expressed in bold metaphors and colloquial language, struggle with and illuminate each other, is most apparent in the poetry of one of Herbert's contemporaries, John Donne, and is called metaphysical poetry. In "Virtue," an example of this combination of the intellectual and the sensuous can be seen in the second line of the third quatrain, when the spring is compared to a box of compressed sweets.

Summary

Our lives are short and they are not going to please us for long.” Virtue” is a beautiful short lyric comprising only sixteen lines in four stanzas of four lines each. In this poem, Herbert gives voice to his conviction that everything in this world — days, life, or even spring — is subject to destruction. Yet the virtuous soul is mortal and eternal.

Analysis

Lines 1-4

Herbert begins "Virtue" with an apostrophe, or invocation. That is, here, he starts with a direct rhetorical address to a personified thing: as if speaking to the day, the narrator says, "Sweet day" and then characterizes the day as "cool," "calm," and "bright." Thus, for one noun, "day," he provides four adjectives. The rest of the line is made up of the adverbial "so," signifying intensity, repeated three times. Herbert is presenting a fairly generic image, without any action, as no verb appears among these eight words. Nor can a verb be found in the next line, which is a kind of appositive, or a noun phrase placed beside the noun that it describes. "The bridal of the earth and sky," which describes the "day," indicates no action, instead merely illustrating and amplifying the conditions depicted in the first line. That is, the "sweet day" is the bridal—the marriage, conjunction, or union—of the earth and the sky.

Day, however, gives way to night, just as life gives way to death: "The dew shall weep thy fall tonight," the narrator asserts, turning a daily natural event, nightfall, into a

metaphor. Beyond death, the line also suggests grief at the loss of paradise on Earth, the Fall, which is the original cause of death in the Judeo-Christian story of the Creation. The evening dew, invested with emotion and made to represent grief, is equated with tears, which are shed at nightfall over the Fall, the sin that brought death into the world.

Lines 5-8

In beginning the second quatrain with the word "sweet," Herbert continues to connect the beauty of nature with impermanence, as any "sweet" thing must, over time, lose its sweetness. Like the day, the rose is an emblem of earthly splendor. It is "sweet" like the day, saturated with color, and graced with magnificence. (Angry and brave are complex words in Herbert's usage, as aspects of their meanings have all but passed from English. Angry, in the seventeenth century, could signify "inflamed," while brave could signify "having a fine or splendid appearance." The suggestions of wrath and courage carried by these words also reinforce the rose's magnificence, as it is characterized thus as standing knowingly in the prospect

of doom.) So magnificent is the rose that Herbert calls one who looks at it a "rash gazer." Here, "rash" suggests a lack of necessary caution in taking in a sight so dazzling that the gazer is moved to "wipe," or rub, "his eye," as one does in wonder. Also, a warning may be understood to be present in the word "rash": one who beholds the rose is in danger of desiring its seductive but transitory beauty over the sweetness of what endures in eternity, the soul itself.

As with the day, so with the rose: despite its living splendor, death awaits. "Thy root," buried in the earth, as it must be if the rose is to flourish, "is ever in its grave." Thus, life and death are entwined, and death is an ever-present aspect of life. Indeed, by emphasizing the common ground shared by the root, the source of life, and the grave, the receptacle for death, Herbert evokes two Christian lessons: first, that life contains elements of death and must inevitably give way to death and, second, that death is not finality but part of the continuum of existence. In awareness of death, one realizes the true meaning and purpose of life and will thus prepare his or her soul, through the exercise of virtue, for eternity.

Lines 9-12

The word "sweet" begins the third quatrain as well, now describing the spring, which is subsequently characterized as "full of sweet days and roses." As such, the delights presented in the first two quatrains are contained in the third, and the narrator solidifies his suggestion of the earth's rich bounty. In the second line of the quatrain, spring is likened to "a box where sweets compacted lie." Then, as in the previous quatrains, the third line iterates the transience of earthly delights: "My music shows ye have your closes." Through this line, the narrator offers the poem itself as proof of his argument regarding the impermanence of things. By "my music," the narrator refers to the very verse being read, this poem. "Close" is a technical term in music indicating the resolution of a musical phrase. Thus, the poetic verse, like everything else the narrator has so far depicted, must come to an end, as it temporarily does with the four stressed and conclusive beats of the twelfth line: "And all must die."

Lines 13-16

Breaking the pattern established in the previous three quatrains, the final quatrain begins not with the word "sweet"

but with a limiting expression: "Only a." The reader has been told that the "sweet day," the "sweet rose," and the "sweet spring" all "must die." In contrast to them is the soul: "Only a sweet and virtuous soul / … never gives." "Sweet" is no longer used to denote an aesthetic quality, nor is the word sufficient to stand alone anymore; in fact, in being yoked with "virtuous," it is invested with a moral and spiritual dimension. The soul that is sweet and virtuous, unlike the spring, the rose, and the day, "never gives," that is, it never gives way to death, instead ever enduring. Such a sweet soul, disciplined by virtue like wood that has been seasoned, is fully strengthened. Lumber that has been seasoned, aged, and dried is more suitable for use in construction than is fresh lumber; "seasoned timber" is sturdy and enduring. The conflagration suggested in line 15 by the image of "the whole world turn[ing] to coal" alludes to chapter 3, verse 10, of 2 Peter, in the New Testament, where Peter speaks of "the day of the Lord," the judgment day when "the elements shall melt with fervent heat" and "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

Thus, the first three quatrains present images of earthly beauty, but each ends with the word "die." The last quatrain presents images of an eternal soul and of a conflagration that turns the whole world, except that virtuous soul, to blackened coal, and its last line ends with the word "live." As such, the entire poem, which all along warned of death, shows the way in which Herbert believes that he and his readers may achieve eternal life: by shunning transient glory and humbly embracing virtue.

Style

Anaphora

Anaphora is the repetition of words and patterns for poetic effect. This device is immediately apparent in the first line, with the triple repetition of the word "so." Moreover, the same poetic structure governs each of the first three stanzas, while the fourth stanza is shaped by a slight variation of this structure. Each of the first three stanzas begins with the word "sweet" and ends with the word "die." The second line of each stanza presents an image reflecting nature's splendor, while the third line of each stanza offers a diminution, or lessening, of that splendor. Each of the fourth

lines contains four one-syllable words, with these four words nearly identical from stanza to stanza. The effect of anaphora is to make an argument by means of a pattern of language, as the use of anaphora suggests that in several different instances, the same laws apply. Finally, the variation allowed by the last stanza breaks the tension built up by the repetition, offering a solution, the practice of virtue, to a problem that had seemed unsolvable, transience.

Apostrophe

In poetry, apostrophe is the technique of calling upon or addressing a particular person or thing. In the first three stanzas of "Virtue," Herbert indirectly addresses the reader of the poem by directly addressing the day, a rose, and the spring. In the fourth stanza, he does not address the soul but instead talks about it. Thus, he differentiates his relationship to the eternal world of the soul from his relationship to the natural world. Also, he thus puts himself in the role of a teacher and a preacher, conveying a message about the natural world and its impermanence.

Henry Vaughan (1621–1695)

Henry Vaughan was considered by Samuel Johnson as one of the metaphysical poets, who were a group of seventeenth century British poets whose works were described as witty, elaborate and original and which questioned the meaning of spirituality and religion.

The major poetry of Vaughan, all religious in nature, was published in 1650 and 1655. Some of the best poems in it are "The Morning Watch, " "The Retreat, " "Childhood, " "The Dawning, " and "Peace." He published more religious verse and prose in his later years, and a number of translations.

Vaughan is a poet in whom it is easy to trace the influence of others, particularly the wit of John Donne and the quiet, understated, dramatic technique of George Herbert, to whom he credited his religious conversion. Vaughan's work was attributed to the influential Welsh poet George Herbert, who inspired him and revived his spiritual side. Vaughan called Herbert "that blessed man". Indeed Vaughan's poetry is often compared to that of George Herbert, especially for his literary style. And though

some critics at the time accused Vaughan of imitating Herbert too closely there is no doubt Vaughan's ability to make the reader understand his words is undeniable and his vision of nature and mysticism would influence poets centuries after his death.

The Retreat

Happy those early days! when I

Shined in my angel infancy.

Before I understood this place

Appointed for my second race,

Or taught my soul to fancy aught

But a white, celestial thought;

When yet I had not walked above

A mile or two from my first love,

And looking back, at that short space,

Could see a glimpse of His bright face;

When on some gilded cloud or flower

My gazing soul would dwell an hour,

And in those weaker glories spy

Some shadows of eternity;

Before I taught my tongue to wound

My conscience with a sinful sound,

Or had the black art to dispense

A several sin to every sense,

But felt through all this fleshly dress

Bright shoots of everlastingness.

O, how I long to travel back,

And tread again that ancient track!

That I might once more reach that plain

Where first I left my glorious train,

From whence th’ enlightened spirit sees

That shady city of palm trees.

But, ah! my soul with too much stay

Is drunk, and staggers in the way.

Some men a forward motion love;

But I by backward steps would move,

And when this dust falls to the urn,

In that state I came, return.

Commentary

‘The Retreat’ by Henry Vaughan is a thirty-two line poem. The poet has chosen to utilize a structured and consistent pattern of **rhyme** which follows **the scheme** of aabbccdd… and so on, throughout the entire text. The poet’s selection of the word “retreat” in the title describes a speaker’s desire to escape to the past where he was a younger, purer, and generally happier human being.

Vaughan’s Retreat is a religious lyric, a spiritual optimism. It is also a characteristic poem of the metaphysical school. Vanghan’s expression and imagery bear the marks of the metaphysical religious poem of Donne and Herbert. The idea behind the poem is the theological concept that the human soul existed before birth in a state of grace and that life on Earth is merely an interval before it can return whence it came.

In the poem ‘The Retreat’ Henry Vaughan regrets the loss of the innocence of childhood, when life was lived in close communion with God. Here the poet glorifies childhood, which, according to Vaughan, is a time of innocence, and a time when one still has memories of one’s life in heaven from where one comes into this world. The poet regards the time of childhood as a happy time. It was a time when the poet shone with an angelic light. He was not spoiled by the physical and material world. It was a time when the poet had thoughts only of heaven and when he could still see glimpses of God. During his childhood, the poet had vision of eternity when he looked at a cloud or a flower as the beauty of these natural objects was a reflection of the glories of heaven and the poet was able to perceive those glories. He was so innocent in those days that he never uttered a sinful word and never had a sinful desire. The white souled child coming from celestial home felt ‘bright shoots of everlastingness’ through his fleshly screen. In other words though this physical body he could feel the bright beams of eternity.

The poet feels that as the man grows he becomes sinful in thoughts, words and deeds. Now the influences of the

material world prevent him from seeing visions of heaven. So the poet wishes to retrace his steps to the past when he was a child. He wants to be a child again so that he can bathe himself in the golden vision of heaven. People generally like to go forward in life. But the poet wants to retreat to his childhood because according to him a movement back to childhood would also be a spiritual progression.

The theme of the poem is the glorification of the childhood. Henry Vaughan was a very religious person at heart. This poem 'The Retreat' can be seen as outpouring of his religious notions.

He says that man's soul came from heaven. There the man lived in communion with God. So in the early childhood, the child has memories of that first home. When he looks back he can see the shining, bright face of God, the master of universe. As a child he has not travelled farther than a mile or two and, therefore he can still envision heaven's celestial beauty and glory. He can perceive the heavenly beauty and eternity in the beauties of natural objects like clouds and flowers as these natural objects are the pictures or images of those glories of heaven.

But as the man grows up he is lost in this material world. He becomes sinful in his thoughts, words and deeds. He acquires enough wickedness. He becomes selfish and is lost in the worldly affairs. He just wants to satisfy the needs of his five senses. Now he utters sinful words and his heart is full of wicked ideas and thoughts. Now the vision of heavenly beauty, which is perceived by him as child, is lost. Under the corrupt effect of materialism, his soul staggers. Here the poet's soul is compared to a drunken man who cannot think and walk properly.

In the same way a grown up man cannot have communion with God. But the poet is fed up of these worldly affairs and wishes to go back to the past when he was a child. He wants to be a child again so that he can bathe himself in the golden vision of heaven. Here the title of the poem 'The Retreat' itself is justified in the sense that the movement back to childhood would be a spiritual progression of the poet. Thus the poet beautifully expresses the theme of heavenly purity of the childhood.

Analysis

1-20 In these lines from the poem The Retreat the poet Henry Vaughan laments over the loss of his childhood vision and the fading away of the heavenly glory associated with that kind of vision. Not only that, he confesses how he has moved himself away from the glory by committing various sins of the body. The poet begins the poem with an agonizing realization that he had been really happy in his childhood. The reason he cites is that at that time he had been in that period of life, which is marked of innocence and ignorance. At that time he only had in mind the memory of the ever-radiant supreme being, God. He feels that he was not far from God then, and that he could see His bright face from a distance. Not only that, during his childhood it was possible for him to see that reflection of the eternal glory of God in the transitory yet beautiful things of the world, like a sunlit cloudlet or flower. He confesses agonizingly that all that had happened long ago before he learnt the crooked ways of life and began committing all kinds of sins with all the senses. On the philosophical level, what Vaughan's says in the poem, tallies with Plato's theory of anamnesis and transmigration of the soul. Plato said that before being

transplanted into the human body, the human soul resides in the world of Ideas, of Beauty, Truth and Goodness. But once transplanted into matter it forgets its previous existence in the gradual growing contacts with the material world. But the next moment the poet uses an image, “a white, Celestial thought”, which derives its symbolism from Neo-Platonic mysticism and Christian mythology. Neo-Platonism explains the manifest material world as merely an illuminated illusion of a light from a single, ever-radiant divine source, God. The poet finds a spiritual recovery in the Platonic doctrine of Love: he finds the reflections of the Universal Beauty in the particular things of physical beauty. That is to say, by meditating on the particular he tries to graduate to the understanding of the Universal Beauty of God

21-32 In these lines from the poem The Retreat the poet Henry Vaughan makes a retrospection of the degeneration and degradation of his own personal life in contrast to what he had been during his childhood. The memory of that phase of life forces him to go back to that divine world, from which his soul, he believes, came to this world. The poet comes to an agonizing realization that he had been really

happy in his childhood. At that time he only had in mind the memory of the ever-radiant supreme being, God. He feels that he was not far from God then, and that he could see His bright face from a distance. Not only that, during his childhood it was possible for him to see that reflection of the eternal glory of God in the transitory yet beautiful things of the world, like a sunlit cloudlet or flower. He confesses agonizingly that all that had happened long ago before he learnt the crooked ways of life and began committing all kinds of sins with all the senses. That is why he expresses his peculiar desire to take a backward motion in order to reach the source, that is, heaven from which he came. Like Moses, who was once granted one side of the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, the poet wants to go back to “That city of Palm trees” or heaven. Now, he feels that his soul, after remaining for a long time in this world and drinking too much to the material things of this world, is feeble. He knows he is unsteady, yet he firmly expresses his renewed conviction that he will be able to reach the original home when his body dissolves into dust.

Lines 1-6

In the first section of this piece, the speaker begins by making an exclamation, which at this point, has no defining context. On first reading, one might see this line as a celebratory statement, but after coming to a greater understanding of the text it becomes clear it is closer to grief than joy.

The speaker is looking back on the days of his youth and remembering what it was like when he “Shined in [his] angel infancy.” He is long past these moments but remembers them very fondly. They seem to him to be the clearest, purist, parts of his life. The following lines continue his reminisces by speaking of how now he understands “this place.”

He knows the world he is living in and can see all of its dark corners. Before though, this was not the case. As a youth, he used to live so purely he didn’t even think about how “celestial” his thoughts were. Now, thinking cleanly takes a concerted effort.

Lines 7-14

In the next section of ‘The Retreat’, the speaker goes on to describe what his life was like before he strayed far from home. It was during this period that he “had not walked” more than a “mile or two from” his “first love.” He had not seen very much of the world at this point and knew nothing about its dangers. When he looks back now he realizes this was when he could “glimpse” the face of God.

Throughout ‘The Retreat’, Henry Vaughan refers to our (short) time on Earth, contrasting it with the eternity of heaven. In rhyming ‘flower’ with ‘hour’, Vaughan reminds us that everything has its moment in the sun and then withers and dies, like a flower. Our childhood is but an hour; our lives scarcely longer.

Yet the couplet that follows, crowned with ‘eternity’ as it is, reminds us that, for Vaughan at least, there is something much vaster in the world – or rather, Henry Vaughan The Retreat beyond the world. Before he had grown a bit older and started sinning, Vaughan tells us, he felt the bright shoots of ‘everlastingness’. These ‘bright shoots’ are to be

contrasted with the flower we encountered a few lines before: these shoots will not wither away and die.

Lines 15-20

In the next section, the poet continues on the same path of describing the life he used to lead when he was young. The speaker is remembering the years of his life which were not marked by his “tongue” wounding his own “conscience.” He didn’t worry about what was morally right or wrong, he simply lived as a young person.

This is expanded upon in the next lines in which he speaks of “black art” tainting emotions. Before he aged he did not worry about how he felt and if it was sinful. Now though, the nature of his own emotions bothers him. This has been brought on by the teachings of society and perhaps religion. Rather than experience these guilty thoughts about his own life, he felt within his “fleshy dress,” or body, “shoots of everlastingness.” It seemed to his younger self that he would live forever in a perpetual state of youth.

Lines 21-26

The next part of 'The Retreat' takes a turn. He stops reminiscing and instead expresses his general longing for the past. He makes another exclamation stating, "O, how I long to travel back" to the past. The speaker would rather live in the past and walk again on "that ancient track" than live as he does now.

If he could return, he might have a chance of reaching "that plain" where he left his "glorious train." He would hope to recover his previous state of being. He knows exactly where he left it too, on the hill alongside the "enlightened spirit." The spirit, which represents his youth, is able to see the "shady city of palm trees" from where it rests. Here the city of Palm trees means the celestial city or Heaven which is also considered as a second Jerusalem.

Vaughan concludes 'The Retreat' by saying that, whereas many people prefer to think in terms of progress, looking forward to the future, he prefers to look back to this earlier time when he was in touch with heaven and glimpsed the eternity of the afterlife (and, indeed, what we might call the before life).

Lines 27-32

In the last six lines, the speaker mourns for what he will never have again. He has become “drunk” with his own longings and remembrances. The speaker knows it is not a healthy way to live as he will “stagger” about his life without purpose. This fact does not keep him from changing his opinion. He knows he is unlike other men; he loves the “backward steps” rather than the “forward motion.”

“Some men a forward motion love/ But I by backward steps would move”. Rhetorically, a paradox is a statement which apparently seems self-contradictory or absurd, but in reality carries a sound sense. Here, too, the poet makes a paradoxical statement that backward motion would be better for him. This is because forward motion is morally backward as it leads on to sin, on the other hand backward motion in time leads to innocence and so morally forward. ‘Retreat’ to the innocent days of childhood, when God was an ever-present reality to him, is his welcome note. The title word thus strikes the essence of the poem. The poet dislikes human or earthly existence i.e. ‘this place’ and ‘second race’ because on earth the soul is far removed from God. He wishes to retreat to heaven, the abode of God.

In the final two lines, he speaks about this own death. It will be the ultimate returning as he resumes the form of “dust.” His body will return to the earth and become again what it was before he was born.

Vaughan ends by saying that, if he looks forward to anything, it is to returning to the dust of which he was constituted before his birth – a reference to the biblical image of man being made from dust, to which he is returned when he dies. (This is most familiar to us these days through the Burial of the Dead from the Book of Common Prayer: ‘Ashes to ashes, dust to dust’.)

Andrew Marvell (1621–1678)

Andrew Marvell was a 17th century English metaphysical poet and an infrequent member of the English Parliament's House of Commons. Marvell was known as a strong supporter of Republican ideals during the English Revolution of 1649. Marvell is often considered, along with writers such as John Donne and George Herbert, to belong to the 'metaphysical' school of poetry. Some of his famous works, such as 'To His Coy Mistress', 'On a Drop of Dew', 'The Garden' and 'The Mower', combine romantic and pastoral themes with reflections on mortality and social upheavals.

Marvell was also known as a charged political writer, and many of his poems – such as "An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return to England" – illustrate his strong belief in Republican government and principles that opposed absolute monarchy. Marvell wrote the poem in 1650. It is a masterfully ambivalent treatment of the Civil Wars, of Charles I's dignity at the moment of his execution ('he nothing common did or mean / Upon that memorable scene'), of Cromwell's determination and ultimately on how much more bloodshed might be necessary to keep the new

republic stable. The poem ominously ends with a reminder that ‘The same arts that did gain / A power, must it maintain’.

In 1657, Marvell joined John Milton, who by that time had lost his sight, in service as Latin secretary to Cromwell's Council of State. After Cromwell died, the monarchy of Charles II was restored in 1660. Marvell used his political status to free John Milton who was jailed during the restoration. Marvell avoided punishment for Milton and helped convince the government of Charles II not to execute Milton for his antimonarchical writings and revolutionary activities.

Marvell is often associated with the 17th century school of English metaphysical poets, which also includes John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan and Richard Crashaw, among others. Scholars and historians define these writers' style by their elaborate and often outlandish metaphorical constructs, or “conceits,” such as Marvell’s extended poetic comparison of the human soul to a drop of dew.

A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body

The poem, A Dialogue Between the Soul and Body by Andrew Marvell describes the conflict between the human body and the human Soul, each attributing its troubles and sufferings to the other. The Soul feels that it is a prisoner inside the Body while the Body feels that the Soul is a tyrant imposing all kinds of restrictions upon the Body.

The Soul wishes that the Body should die so that the Soul can go back to heaven, its original abode. The Body, in turn, holds the Soul responsible for all the sins that the Body commits. All sins, says the Body, are the results of the many and conflicting emotions which the Soul experiences.

SOUL

O who shall, from this dungeon, raise

A soul enslav'd so many ways?

With bolts of bones, that fetter'd stands

In feet, and manacled in hands;

Here blinded with an eye, and there

Deaf with the drumming of an ear;

A soul hung up, as ’twere, in chains

Of nerves, and arteries, and veins;

Tortur’d, besides each other part,

In a vain head, and double heart.

BODY

O who shall me deliver whole

From bonds of this tyrannic soul?

Which, stretch’d upright, impales me so

That mine own precipice I go;

And warms and moves this needless frame,

(A fever could but do the same)

And, wanting where its spite to try,

Has made me live to let me die.

A body that could never rest,

Since this ill spirit it possest.

SOUL

What magic could me thus confine

Within another’s grief to pine?

Where whatsoever it complain,

I feel, that cannot feel, the pain;

And all my care itself employs;

That to preserve which me destroys;

Constrain’d not only to endure

Diseases, but, what’s worse, the cure;

And ready oft the port to gain,

Am shipwreck’d into health again.

BODY

But physic yet could never reach

The maladies thou me dost teach;

Whom first the cramp of hope does tear,

And then the palsy shakes of fear;

The pestilence of love does heat,

Or hatred’s hidden ulcer eat;

Joy’s cheerful madness does perplex,

Or sorrow’s other madness vex;

Which knowledge forces me to know,

And memory will not forego.

What but a soul could have the wit

To build me up for sin so fit?

So architects do square and hew

Green trees that in the forest grew.

Commentary

In his poem, "A Dialogue Between the Soul and Body", Andrew Marvell uses intense imagery, unconventional structure, and personification to portray the body and soul as enemies who represent the conflicts between human spirituality and human instinct. Body and Soul are typically viewed as two entities that are codependent on one another, but they entrap and torture each other in this poem. Marvell personifies Body and Soul, and he allows them to debate back and forth throughout the poem. The poem presents the reader with a question: are humans just bodies who are meant to live naturally without a soul to dictate it, or are they souls that are trapped inside of a body and locked in its constraints? Marvell deliberately ends the poem without a clear "winner", allowing the reader to decide for himself.

Marvell structures the poem in the form of a debate between the body and the soul, creating an aggressive, combative tone. There are four stanzas, and each section is divided into ten lines with a repeating rhyme scheme (AA, BB, CC, DD, EE), which adds to this tone by creating a melodic, conversational flow.

Analysis

Soul says

O who will liberate me from this human body in which I am being held as a prisoner in so many ways? I am housed in this Body all the bones of which are clamped on me like bolts. The feet of this Body are like fetters for me, and its hands are like manacles. The feet, as well as the hands, are like chains for me.

The eyes of the Body are a binding obstruction for me; and the impact of external sounds on the Body's ear-drum has a deafening effect on me. I am suspended within the Body's complex neuro-vascular system (consisting of nerves, arteries, and veins).

Each organ of the Body causes torture to me, and I am especially tormented by the vanity of its head and the duplicity of its heart, besides being tormented by the vices which are committed by each other organ of the Body.

➔ The soul opens the batting with a powerful complaint: it is not only being imprisoned in the body, but tortured by it. The image of the soul being imprisoned is typically Platonic. Its move is to escape through the death of the body. Marvell plays with several parts of this extended conceit: ‘blinded with an Eye' makes a nice paradox. The organs of sense blind (and bind) the soul to heaven, keeping it bound to sense impressions. Blinding was a common form of torture, as was constant sound. The worst part is ‘a vain head', meaning stuffed with idle, fruitless thoughts, and a ‘double Heart', because divided.

Body replies

O who will liberate me in my entirety from the restraints of this dictatorial Soul? The Soul is like a thin, pointed stake driven into me and left there. The Soul is stretched upright in me, forcing me into an unnatural, stiff, and unbending

posture so that I feel like a walking precipice always in danger of collapsing and getting destroyed. The Soul certainly keeps me warm and animates me, but I do not need either warmth or the capacity to move.

Those results can be achieved by me even through a fever which can shake me and give me heat. Actually the Soul, having no other outlet for its malice, gives life to me only in order to let me die afterward. Indeed, I am in no position to get any rest at any time because I am possessed by the Soul which is an evil spirit.

➔ The body is not too well pleased with this onslaught, and accuses the soul of driving it around, when all it wants is a quiet life. It even has to get up and walk upright! (‘mine own Precipice I go'). The soul makes it restless with its own restlessness. It feels possessed by ‘this ill spirit'.

Soul's response

I do not understand what magic works to keep me as a prisoner here and to force me to suffer for the sorrows of the Body. I, who is supposed to be incapable of feeling any pain, do yet feel pained whenever the Body suffers from any ailment,. It is strange that I should have to devote all my

care to the preservation of this Body which has a tormenting effect on me and which, thus, tries to wreck me.

I am forced not only to endure the diseases of the Body, but worse than that is the fact that I have to endure the treatment which the Body undergoes for its diseases and which restore it to health. The restoration of the Body to health is even worse for me than the diseases which afflict it and which make me suffer also.

Whenever the Body seems to be threatened with death, I have the feeling that I shall soon be released from my imprisonment and shall then go back to heaven; but when the Body gets well again, I feel like sailors who have been ship-wrecked.

➔ The soul's response is to enlarge on the ‘double Heart'. It has its own grief through being trapped in the body and has to bear the body's grief as well. We might say in modern terms, the soul here is both the psychology and the spirituality of human existence: the psychology derives from the body; the spirituality, from its heavenly origins. Left to itself, it would escape the body by letting it die; but the body's concern is to keep itself alive, and the soul is

forced to help it do that. Again, Marvell makes the most of this paradox in his imagery: ‘Shipwrackt into health again'; ‘whats worse, the cure'.

Body concludes

But no medicine can ever cure the diseases which you, O Soul, impose upon me. When you experience any hope, I am racked with cramp. When you experience any fear, I feel shaken as if by palsy. If you experience love, I am fevered with the plague.

When you experience hatred, I am consumed with internal ulcers. If you experience joy, I feel madly elated. If you experience grief, I feel madly depressed. It is your knowledge which makes me know all this, and it is your memory which does not let me forget any of these things.

Only a Soul like you could have the ingenuity to make of me a house in which sin has taken up its abode. All the sins that I commit originate from you. You have adopted the same technique in relation to me which architects adopt in building houses from the logs of wood obtained from the green trees which have been cut down in a forest and which

have then been trimmed and reduced to the required size by carpenters with their axes and saws.

- ➔ The body is allowed its second innings. It lists the psychological suffering the soul forces on it through hope, fear, love, hatred and so on. The list goes on through the whole stanza. It climaxes with the paradox: “What but a Soul could have the wit/
  To build me up for Sin so fit?”
- ➔ Only the soul has given it the consciousness of sin. Left to itself, it would live like the animals in instinctive, undifferentiated being. The final image is one that Marvell was to take up several times in his ‘Mower' poems: the body is like an undifferentiated tree growing naturally; the soul like an architect (or topiary gardener, as we might say), which trims and prunes it into all kinds of outlandish and unnatural shapes.
- ➔ The final question is a real dilemma, then: Marvell has been working slowly towards it. Do human beings live ‘as Nature intended', however shapeless that life might be morally or intellectually? Or do we raise ourselves through, allowing our ‘souls' or spirits to restrain and shape our lives according to some overall design?

Marvell does not push through to the soul's early conclusion: its wish for death as escape. He recognises life is something that has to be accepted, however problematic it is.

Themes

‘A Dialogue between the Soul and Body’ by Andrew Marvell contains several themes. The eternal conflict between the soul and body is **the major theme** of the poem. In this poem, Marvell provides a Christian perspective, and presents the paradox in his poem. It is true that in this world, they cannot exist without each other.

But sometimes for the passion of the soul, the body suffers. In some instances, the body’s sinful activities pain the soul deeply. This conflict goes on until a person takes control and pacify both of them.

There is **another important theme** of suffering in the poem. The poet divides it into two parts. **One** is spiritual suffering and **another** is bodily suffering. Spiritual suffering is different from the sensory. But, they are connected. As

the soul lives inside the body, one's misdoings will affect the other. Only the spirit of salvation from the Christian perspective or the practice of meditation and self-awareness can save the body as well as the soul from this lifelong suffering. Otherwise, both of them remain in this chain of suffering until the body dies or the soul leaves for its destination.

Imagery and Metaphysical Elements in the Poem

The poem, *A Dialogue Between the Soul and Body* by Andrew Marvell contains vivid and concrete imagery and makes use of a number of conceits of the metaphysical kind. In fact, the very basis of the poem is the metaphysical kind.

In fact, the very basis of the poem is the metaphysical concept that the Soul and the Body are separate entities. The Body feeling itself to be a victim of the Soul's tyranny, and the Soul believing itself to be a prisoner inside the Body are metaphysical conceits.

In the opening speech, we have a graphic picture of a prisoner being held in chains and fetters, and about to be

hanged on the gallows. In the second speech, we have a vivid picture of the Body going about like a walking precipice.

In the third stanza, we have a vivid picture of a ship nearing its destination but getting wrecked just when it is close to the harbor. In the final speech we have a series of vivid pictures describing the physical manifestations of the emotions experienced by the Soul.

The Cavalier Poets

During the English Renaissance, two major groups of poets emerged: the Metaphysical poets and the Cavalier poets. While the Metaphysical poets mainly were middle class, the Cavalier poets often were aristocrats and supported the monarchy of Charles I.

The cavalier or Caroline (adjective from Charles) poets, called Royalists, was a school of English poets of the 17th century, who supported King Charles I (1625–49), who was later executed as a result of a English civil war (1642–1651). Charles, an expert of the fine arts, supported poets who created the art he craved. These poets in turn grouped themselves with the King and his service, thus becoming Cavalier Poets. Many of the poems centered around sensual, romantic love and also the idea of carpe diem, which means to 'seize the day.' To the Cavalier poet, enjoying life was far more important than following moral codes. They lived for the moment. Cavalier poetry mirrored the attitudes of courtiers. The meaning of cavalier is showing arrogant and indifferent. This describes the attitude of Cavalier poets.

Cavalier Poetry is an early seventeenth century movement centered mainly on Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, John Suckling, Richard Lovelace, and Carew. Most of these poets were admirers of Ben Jonson. Cavalier Poetry is different from metaphysical poetry since it does not use complicated metaphors and unrealistic imagery, but prefers a rather straightforward expression. This poetry was erotic and its strength lied in its shortness. Simply, it did not confuse readers with deep meaning and allegory but reflected every thought as they were supposed to be understood along with their motto "Carpe Diem" meaning "seize the day".

They were known as ‘Tribe of Ben’ or ‘Sons of Ben’. 'Ben' stands for Ben Jonson, 'Tribe' means a cohesive group under a chief. Here the leader is Ben Jonson in the realm of literary art for a number of younger poets of the time. They, no doubt, seek inspiration from Ben Jonson and like to call themselves his 'sons'. Ben Jonson left the Elizabethan sonnet and started new genres like epigram and satire, which were cultivated by the Cavalier poets. All these poets were associated with the Court of Charles I. They were also known as Cavalier Poets, The cavaliers

were Royalists and were pitted against the Round heads who were supporters of Cromwell. The faith of the cavaliers was Anglican and they aligned with the squires. The Roundheads were Puritans and were confined to the industrial centers. The Tribe of Ben was a part of the cavalier group. All cavalier poets did not belong to the tribe.

The Cavalier poets wrote in a lighter, more elegant and artificial style than the Metaphysical poets. Leading members of the group include Ben Jonson, Richard Lovelace, Robert Herrick, Edmund Waller, Thomas Carew and John Denham.

Robert Herrick was one of the greatest Cavalier lyricists. He was the chief of those who gained inspirations from Ben Jonson & called themselves “the sons of Ben”.

Thomas Carew was a reputed wit of his times. He was known as the courtly & polished love poet.

Sir John Suckling ruined himself in the royalist cause. He was rich, brilliant & witty.

Richard Lovelace Like Suckling, he was also rich & brilliant & ruined himself in royalist cause.

➔Characteristics Of Cavalier Poetry

- The cavalier poets are great lovers of nature. They observe nature minutely and describe it with feelings.
- Cavalier poetry is different from traditional poetry in its subject matter. Instead of tackling issues like religion, philosophy, and the arts, cavalier poetry aims to express the joy and simple gratification of celebratory things much livelier than the traditional works of their predecessors.
- The intent of their works was often to promote the crown (particularly Charles I), and cavalier poets spoke outwardly against the Roundheads who supported the rebellion of Parliament against the crown.
- Most cavalier works had allegorical and/or classical references. They drew upon the knowledge of Horace, Cicero, and Ovid By using these resources they were able to produce poetry that impressed King Charles I.
- The Cavalier poets wrote short lyrical poems but did not like sonnets.
- Cavalier poets did not write as professionals for publicity. They wrote carelessly and their poetry was immature.
- They avoided the subject of religion, apart from making one or two graceful speeches.

- They avoided discovering the depths of the soul.
- Cavalier poetry's main thematic concern is the pleasure.
- The tone of Cavalier poetry is light.

In the mid-1600s, civil war broke out in England between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians. King Charles I was sentenced to death, and Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell became the new leader of the Commonwealth. Though the Cavaliers flourished during reign of Charles I, they were disgraced when Oliver Cromwell became leader. The Cavaliers, all supporters of the monarchy, disappeared from the public eye. The only member of the "Tribe" who survived this era was Robert Herrick. The monarchy eventually was restored in 1660 with the coronation of Charles II.

Puritanism

Puritanism is a religious reform movement in the late 16th and 17th centuries that sought to “purify” the Church of England of remnants of the Roman Catholic “popery” that the Puritans claimed had been retained after the religious settlement reached early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Puritans became noted in the 17th century for a spirit of moral and religious earnestness that informed their whole way of life, and they sought through church reform to make their lifestyle the pattern for the whole nation.

The idea of a Puritan poet may seem a bit of a contradiction as Puritans disagreed with the practice of using metaphor and verbal flourishes in speech and writing. The Puritan movement was one for very literal expression and teaching. But, over time, some room for creative expression arose and Puritan poets such as John Milton, Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor and John Dryden produced some of the greatest verse of their age.

John Milton (1608 : 1674)

After William Shakespeare, is considered to be one of the great writers in England. Milton, most famous for his epic poem "Paradise Lost" in 1667, was an English poet with religious beliefs emphasizing central Puritanical views. While the work acted as an expression of his despair over the failure of the Puritan Revolution against the English Catholic Church, it also indicated his optimism in human potential. A sequel entitled "Paradise Regained" was published in 1671.

John Milton's career as a writer of prose and poetry spans three distinct eras: Stuart England; **the Civil War** (1642-1648) and **Interregnum**, including the Commonwealth (1649-1653) and Protectorate (1654-1660); and the **Restoration**. After the Restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660, Milton was arrested as a defender of the Commonwealth, fined, and soon released.

Milton served as secretary for foreign languages in Cromwell's government, composing official statements defending the Commonwealth. During this time, Milton steadily lost his eyesight, and was completely blind by 1651.

He continued his duties, however, with the aid of Andrew Marvell and other assistants.

Milton composed his great piece of work “Paradise Lost” as a blind poet during the period 1658-1664. Several critics are of the view that this poem reflects the personal despair of Milton due to the failure of Revolution. In 1671, Milton published, “Paradise Regained” a sequel to “Paradise Lost”.

Paradise Lost, which chronicles Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from Eden, is widely regarded as his masterpiece and one of the greatest epic poems in world literature.

His contributions to England include “Paradise Lost” and “Paradise Regained”. These two poems are considered one of the most critical works in English literature because they were both published when there was much debate about religion. The religious argument was deciding whether people could be saved from eternal damnation through faith alone (without good deeds). Milton’s writings show that he advocates for morals and virtues, which are learned by living

life with integrity. He believed that people could only have peace of mind if they live their lives according to God's plan rather than their desires.

In "On His Blindness," Milton writes of his experience of blindness. He asks if God wants him to keep working, in spite of the fact that his job caused him to lose his sight. A personified Patience tells him that God rewards even those who stand and wait to be of service

Sonnet 19

When I consider how my light is spent

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state

Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o’er Land and Ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait.”

Commentary

"When I Consider How My Light is Spent" (also known as "On His Blindness") is one of the best known of the sonnets of John Milton. John Milton’s poem is an autobiographical sonnet in which Milton meditates on his own loss of sight. For most of his life, Milton had been able to see perfectly, but his late-night reading and writing on behalf of the government of the short-lived English Republic, in which he held a very prominent position, helped ruin his eyesight.

In "On His Blindness," poet John Milton explores his experiences with blindness and religious faith. This sonnet—written in the “Petrarchan” rhyme scheme associated with the fourteenth-century Italian poet Francesco Petrarca—is divided into an eight-line “octave” and a six-line “sestet.” The octave rhymes a/b/b/a/a/b/b/a. The sestet rhymes c/d/e/c/d/e. The sonnet is therefore a typical Petrarchan sonnet in form, but in subject matter, the poem departs from the topics usually associated with

Petrarchan poems. Petrarch was most famous for writing about love; Milton departs from that conventional topic to deal with a very practical, very physical problem, but a problem with many broader spiritual implications.

Milton takes advantage of the Italian sonnet form, in which an octave, or first eight lines, poses a problem, and the sestet, or last six lines, offers an answer or resolution. The dividing point between problem and solution is at line 9, usually called the “turn” or volta. In this sonnet Milton uses the turn cleverly to emphasize his own impatience: the turn comes a half line early, and it is his own patience he personifies as speaking out to “prevent” his own impatience.

Analysis

- Stanza 1

The poet starts the poem with ‘When’ thus he introduces his idea in the very beginning. According to him, he often thinks that half of his life or sight or intelligence has been spent in serving humanity, but now he has lost his eyesight and so his other half-life is dark now and wide i.e. challenging as well.

The one talent (of writing) which he had, is useless now because without eyesight he cannot write. Thus it is just a load from the God that has been bestowed on him. The poet laments over the loss of his eyesight and wonders what this talent means for him now as without eyesight he cannot use it.

Since Milton went blind at 42, he'd had the opportunity to use his writing skills, his "talents" in the employee of Oliver Cromwell. He had risen to what was, more than likely, the peak of his possible achievement, the highest position a writer in England could hope to gain. He did not know at the time that his greatest works would be written while he was blind. His "talents" come into play in the next lines, some of the trickiest in the whole piece.

- Stanza 2

In these lines, the lament of poets turns into desire and wonder. He says that he desired to serve his Maker but because of this blindness he cannot do so. He wonders if God still wants to serve Him in spite of the fact that his sight is gone. The poet says that this foolish thought often haunts him.

- Stanza 3

In these lines, the poet says that when such foolish thoughts come into his mind, the patience at once comes to reply that the work of man does not please God, but the ‘who best bear his mild yoke’ i.e. the one who remains patient and content with what he has is most liked by Him.

God has a huge Kingdom and there are thousands of angels who remain in motion to carry God’s order. They never take rest. The poet compares them with those who have the talent and use it to serve God.

- Couplet

On the other hand, there are some other angels also who serve Him just by standing and waiting before God. According to him, their service is equally valuable to God as that of the first category of angels.

The poet compares himself with the later Angels who just keep patience. Thus, in the end, the poet is quite satisfied as he is also serving God just by keeping patience.

Symbols

- Light

When the speaker notes that his or her “light is spent” in the poem’s first line, this means literally that the speaker has lost his or her eyesight. That literal meaning is probably the key one for the poem.

But there is a secondary, symbolic meaning. In the Bible, God is often closely associated with light. Light is the first thing he makes when he creates the world, for example. Pious and faithful Christians are thus often said to “walk with the light” or to “have seen the light,” while people who live in sin or who have not been converted to Christianity are said to be in “darkness.” The loss of light is thus not simply the loss of sight: it also stands, symbolically, for the loss of faith or intimacy with God.

The literal and symbolic meanings attached to "light" are thus connected to each other: because the speaker has lost sight, the speaker fears that he or she has lost "light" itself, that is, a connection to God.

- Dark

"Darkness" is the opposite of light. When the speaker mentions it in line 2, the speaker is thinking of the challenges he or she faces as a blind person: the world has literally become dark for the speaker, turning even the most familiar places and activities into dangerous challenges. In a world built for people who can see, the speaker must now somehow find a way to survive.

But, like "light" in the previous line, the word also has a symbolic sense. It symbolizes sin and the absence of God—who is often closely associated with light in the Christian tradition. When the speaker invokes darkness in line 2, the speaker is thus expressing anxiety about his or her physical and spiritual safety. The world, for this speaker, is a dreary, sinful place: a place of temptation and challenge, which the speaker must carefully negotiate in order to make it to Heaven. The speaker's blindness has made it all the more difficult to do so.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